64 PAGES OF VINTAGE EC HORROR!

TERROR

AN ENTERTAINING COMIC

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

NO. 1
SEPT

2.00
2.50 CANADA

WELL! I ***ASKED*** FOR YOUR LETTERS AND COMMENTS ON THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE ***EXTRA-LARGE*** VERSION OF MY MOLDY MAGAZINE, AND I SURE DID ***RECEIVE!*** HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE MANY LETTERS I GOT, AND YOU ARE HOLDING THE RESULT IN YOUR HANDS. . .I HAVE SHRUNK BACK DOWN TO NORMAL SIZE! OH WELL, THE ***STRETCH*** FELT GREAT, AND MY EDITOR TELLS ME THAT I MIGHT GET TO OCCASIONALLY APPEAR IN THE LARGER FORMAT! KEEP THOSE CARDS AND LETTERS COMING!

Dear Mr. Cochran,

I must be crazy! I just flew three hours to get a copy of the EXTRA-LARGE TALES FROM THE CRYPT. Boy, are my arms tired! Hee! Hee! Hee!

I only had one problem with the EXTRA-LARGE COMIC. It was **so big** that it was damaged on the flight back. How can I protect this monstrous mag?

Your friend till your
ghastly end,
Kevin Hartnell
Nashville, TN

Dear Russ,

It takes a lot to get me to write in, but this did it. Okay, I see your point (but the hair covers it well. . .) about being able to see the wonderful artwork better, but my eyes are good and my house is small. For those of us who collect comics regularly, and bag and box them neatly, this tremendous size makes it very difficult on our Felixish organizing attacks. I like TALES FROM THE CRYPT, VAULT OF HORROR and HAUNT OF FEAR, and up until now snatched them up as soon as they came out. Please don't mess up a good thing; go back to your regular size. Thanks for listening.

Cat Kenney
Olympia, WA

Dear Russ,

I am a 22 year old Sociology major at the Univ. of California at Santa Cruz. I have been reading and collecting comics since I was about 7 or 8 years old. I am writing to let you know that I for one am in support of the larger size. I did not even recognize the comic at first because of the size change. The comic dealer at Atlantis Fantasyworld had to point it out to me. I am glad he did because I would have totally missed it. Other than the surprise of the size change, I like what you are doing. I know this won't be published because it is not full of horrible puns like the letters that are usually published, but I thought I would write anyway. Thanks again for bringing back the vintage EC comics at a reasonable price.

Debra Evans
Santa Cruz, CA

Dear Russ,

I have just finished looking through the first issue (TC) of your EXTRA-LARGE COMICS, and I have to admit you have simply delighted me, and hopefully many others, who will love seeing the old EC stories in a larger format. Reading this comic was a treat for my tired old eyes.

When you first brought this idea to me, I thought you were out of your mind because I was afraid retailers would not want to handle comics other than "normal" size, but after seeing your first issue, I am convinced that you are on to something! (By the way, where's my royalty check?)

Many of my favorite memories are from the years in the early 1950s when Al and I were turning out these EC stories, and your new comics make the EC artwork look better than ever!

Congratulations on yet another job well done!

Love and kisses,
Bill Gaines
New York, NY

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THE CRYPT OF TERROR

OOOOOH! I'M *SO MAD!* AND *YOU'LL* FIND OUT WHY SOON ENOUGH! HEH, HEH (I'M LAUGHING WITH *TEARS* IN MY BLOODSHOT EYES!) THIS IS YOUR *HOST* IN THE *CRYPT OF TERROR, THE CRYPT-KEEPER,* READY TO START OFF *MY* MAG (HAH, *THAT'S* A LAUGH!) WITH ANOTHER *TALE OF TERROR* GUARANTEED TO *CURDLE YOUR ANEMIC BLOOD* AND *SHIVER YOUR SCRAWNY BODIES!* *LATER ON,* IN MY *USUAL SPOT* FOLLOWING *THE VAULT-KEEPER,* YOU'LL FIND SOMETHING *REALLY HORRIBLE!* BUT NOW... I'LL BEGIN THE SPINE-TINGLING YARN I CALL...

SURVIVAL... OR DEATH!

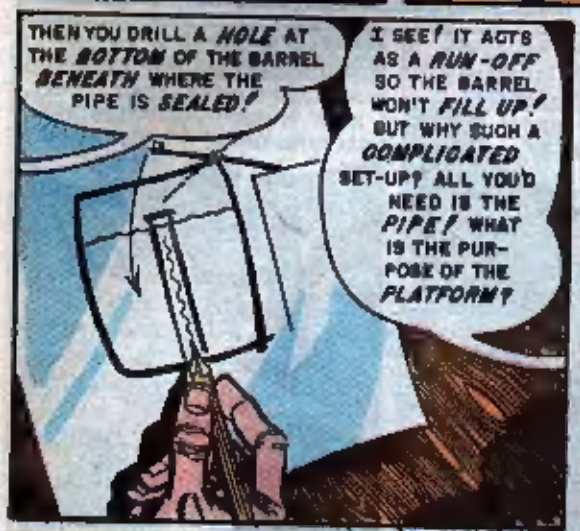
THE MACY-WARNER CARGO SHIP, *PORT-AU-PRINCE,* KNIFED THROUGH THE TOSSING, CARIBBEAN WATERS BOUND FOR THE UNITED STATES! ON BOARD, GREGORY MACY LEANED ON THE DECK RAIL, STARING OUT AT THE BLUE SEA! HIS PARTNER, CHARLES WARNER, STOOD AT HIS SIDE...

WHAT I WOULDN'T GIVE TO BE ON A LUXURY LINER INSTEAD OF THIS OLD ROACH-INFESTED SCOW!
DEAR, DEAR, CHARLES! WATCH THE WAY YOU TALK ABOUT A MACY-WARNER BANANA BOAT!
LOOK, GREG! HOW ABOUT DOING SOMETHING? ANYTHING... BEFORE I GO MAD!
IT'S ALMOST TIME FOR LUNCH, CHARLES! WE'LL TALK TO CAPTAIN HESTON! PERHAPS HE HAS SOME SUGGESTIONS!
LATER...
DELICIOUS LUNCH, CAPTAIN HESTON!
THANK YOU, MR. MACY! AND NOW... YOU MENTIONED SOMETHING ABOUT TALKING TO ME AFTER WE EAT...?
OH, YES! CHARLES FINDS THAT HAVING NOTHING TO DO ALL DAY GETS ON HIS NERVES! HE WONDERS IF YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS THAT MIGHT PROVE ENTERTAINING!
WELL, MR. WARNER, I'M SORRY...BUT THERE'S NOTHING VERY MUCH THAT YOU CAN DO ON A CARGO VESSEL SUCH AS THIS! EXCEPT... PERHAPS... TRY POPPING OFF A FEW RATS!
RATS?! THERE ARE RATS ON THIS BOAT?
OH, COME, MR. WARNER! DON'T BE NAIVE! THERE ARE RATS ON EVERY SHIP... EVEN LUXURY LINERS! THEY COME ABOARD WHEN THE BOAT IS IN PORT!
CHARLES! REMEMBER THE INGENIOUS RAT-TRAP WILKENS TOLD US ABOUT AT THE CLUB THIS SUMMER? YOU REMEMBER... WITH THE BARREL!
OH, YES! BAD! THAT WOULD BE AMUSING! LET'S BUILD ONE! AT LAST... SOME ENTERTAINMENT!
RAT-TRAP, GENTLEMEN!
YES, CAPTAIN HESTON! A DIABOLICALLY CLEVER LITTLE CONTRAPTION! LOOK! YOU FASTEN A TEETER-BOARD TO THE RIM OF A BARREL HALF-FILLED WITH WATER! AT THE END OF THE BOARD THAT EXTENDS OVER THE BARREL, YOU TIE A WEDGE OF CHEESE...

SEE? WHEN THE RAT GOES OUT TO GET THE CHEESE, THE TEETER-BOARD DROPS AND ...PLOP! INTO THE DRINK GOES THE UNFORTUNATE DEVIL! NATURALLY, HE DROWNS!

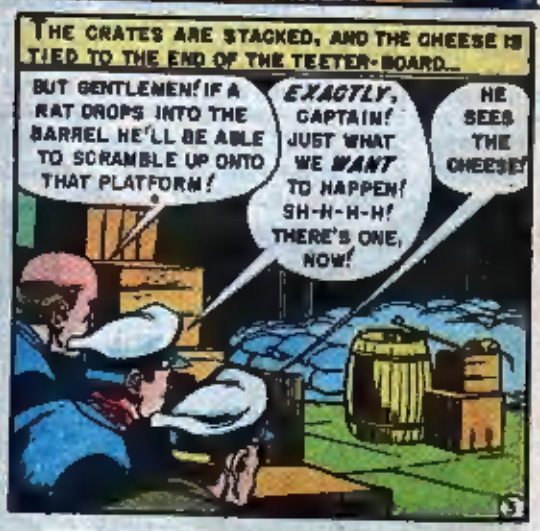
I SEE! VERY INGENIOUS!
YES! BUT CHARLES HASN'T TOLD YOU THE BEST PART OF ALL! GIVE ME THE SKETCH, CHARLES!

IN THE CENTER OF THE BARREL YOU SEAL A PIPE, OH, ABOUT THREE INCHES IN DIAMETER! IT MUST EXTEND ABOVE THE SURFACE OF THE WATER SLIGHTLY! UPON THIS PIPE, YOU SECURE A SMALL PLATFORM OF ABOUT THE SAME DIAMETER AS THE PIPE! LIKE SO!


THEN YOU DRILL A HOLE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BARREL BENEATH WHERE THE PIPE IS SEALED!
I SEE! IT ACTS AS A RUN-OFF SO THE BARREL WON'T FILL UP! BUT WHY SUCH A COMPLICATED SET-UP? ALL YOU'D NEED IS THE PIPE! WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PLATFORM?

YOU'LL SEE, CAPTAIN! YOU'LL SEE! OH, I SAY! THIS IS GOING TO BE FUN, GREGORY!
DO YOU THINK YOU CAN HAVE THIS MADE FOR US, CAPTAIN... EXACTLY AS I'VE DRAWN IT...?
OF COURSE, MR. MACY!

ONE HOUR LATER... IN THE HOLD OF THE SHIP...
PERFECT! PERFECT! EXACTLY WHAT WE MEANT!
NOW TO STACK UP A FEW CRATES SO THE RATS CAN REACH THE TEETER-BOARD!
HERE'S THE SMELLIEST PIECE OF CHEESE THE COOK HAD!


THE CRATES ARE STACKED, AND THE CHEESE IS TIED TO THE END OF THE TEETER-BOARD...
BUT GENTLEMEN! IF A RAT DROPS INTO THE BARREL HE'LL BE ABLE TO SCRAMBLE UP ONTO THAT PLATFORM!
EXACTLY, CAPTAIN! JUST WHAT WE WANT TO HAPPEN! SH-H-H-H! THERE'S ONE, NOW!
HE SEES THE CHEESE!

SLOWLY, THE RAT APPROACHES THE CHEESE...

THE TEETER-BOARD TIPS...

...AND THE RAT PLUNGES INTO THE WATER...

...AND CLIMBS OUT ONTO THE PLATFORM WHICH IS JUST LARGE ENOUGH TO HOLD HIM!

I DON'T GET IT, GENTLEMEN! I...

YOU'LL SEE, CAPTAIN! ALL RIGHT, GREG! THERE'S *ANOTHER* ONE! *WHICH* ONE DO *YOU* WANT?

I'LL TAKE THE *FIRST* ONE! SHALL WE MAKE IT $100?

THE SECOND RAT EDGES OUT ON THE TEETER-BOARD TOWARD THE CHEESE...

ALL RIGHT, GREG! *IT'S A BET!*

THE TEETER-BOARD TIPS UP AND THE RAT PLUNGES INTO THE WATER...

COME, CAPTAIN! *NOW* YOU'LL SEE SOMETHING!

DON'T FORGET, CHARLES! THE *FIRST* ONE'S *MINE!*

PLOP!

THE THREE MEN WATCH, FASCINATED, AS THE SECOND RAT SWIMS TOWARD THE PLATFORM! THE FIRST RAT CROUCHES UPON IT, FANGS BARED, READY TO DEFEND HIS PLACE OF SAFETY...

SEE? HEH, HEH! *SEE?* THERE'S *ONLY ROOM FOR ONE RAT* ON THAT PLATFORM!

GOOD LORD!

THE FIGHT TO THE DEATH BEGINS! THE CAPTAIN TURNS AWAY IN DISGUST...

MINE'S WINNING! *MINE'S WINNING!*

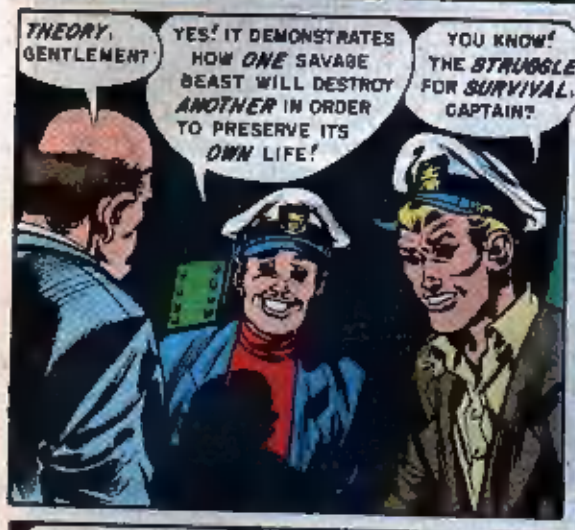
NOT YET! THERE'S STILL SOME FIGHT LEFT IN *MINE!*

COUGH!

FINALLY THE FIGHT IS OVER! THE SECOND RAT HAS WON! IT SITS UPON THE PLATFORM PANTING AS THE WATER BELOW TURNS RED...
HERE'S YOUR HUNDRED, CHARLES!
BETTER LUCK NEXT TIME, GREG!
NEXT TIME?

OF COURSE! THIS CAN GO ON FOR HOURS! THE PLATFORM IS NEVER SUBMERGED AS THE DEAD RATS PILE UP BECAUSE OF THE RUN-OFF...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND, GENTLEMEN! TRAPPING THE RATS IS ONE THING...

...BUT WHY TORTURE THEM THAT WAY? I REALLY DON'T THINK THE PLATFORM IS ESSENTIAL!
PURELY FOR ENTERTAINMENT, CAPTAIN! BESIDES, IT SERVES TO ILLUSTRATE OUR THEORY...


THEORY, GENTLEMEN?
YES! IT DEMONSTRATES HOW ONE SAVAGE BEAST WILL DESTROY ANOTHER IN ORDER TO PRESERVE ITS OWN LIFE!
YOU KNOW! THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL, CAPTAIN?

I THINK THAT HUMAN BEINGS IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BEHAVE EXACTLY THE SAME WAY, GENTLEMEN!
POSSIBLY SOME HUMAN BEINGS, CAPTAIN! CERTAINLY NOT CIVILIZED PERSONS SUCH AS OURSELVES!

EVEN CIVILIZED PERSONS SUCH AS YOURSELVES, GENTLEMEN!
BAH! YOU'RE WRONG, CAPTAIN! A GENTLEMAN IS ALWAYS A GENTLEMAN!
COME, GREG! LET'S HIDE! I'M ONE HUNDRED UP ON YOU!

WELL... IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, GENTLEMEN! I HAVE TO GET BACK TO WORK!
HUH? OH, OF COURSE, CAPTAIN HESTON!
SH-H-H! THERE'S ANOTHER ONE, CHARLES!

THAT NIGHT, THE MACY-WARREN CARGO VESSEL RAN INTO A STORMY SEA! MOUNTAINOUS WAVES LASHED AT THE SHIP, TOSSING IT ABOUT! TWO OF ITS THREE LIFEBOATS WERE TORN FROM THEIR MOORINGS AND LOST...

TOWARDS MORNING, AS A FOG DESCENDED...

CAPTAIN HESTON! THERE'S A CRACK IN THE AFT HULL! WE'RE TAKING ON WATER!

PREPARE TO ABANDON SHIP!

CAPTAIN! WHAT'S GOING ON? WE'RE LISTING!

WE'RE SINKING, MR. WARREN! GET INTO YOUR LIFE-JACKET AND MAKE FOR THE REMAINING LIFEBOAT!

GOOD LORD!

HURRY, CHARLES! HURRY!

THE TWO SHIP OWNERS CLIMBED INTO THE LIFEBOAT AS THE MEMBERS OF THE CREW POURED ONTO THE DECK! IN A FEW SECONDS, THE CROWDED LIFEBOAT WAS LOWERED AWAY...

CAPTAIN! THERE ARE TWO MEN MISSING!

WE'RE ALL GOING TO DIE!

CALM DOWN, MR. MACY!

WHEN THE OVER-CROWDED LIFEBOAT REACHED THE WATER, IT BEGAN TO ROCK AND ROLL LIKE A MATCHSTICK...

WE'LL BE SWAMPED! THERE'S TOO MANY OF US HERE! THE BOAT'S LOADED DOWN TOO MUCH! LOOK!

CAN'T YOU SHUT HIM UP, MR. WARNER?

HE'S RIGHT! THE WATER'S ALMOST UP TO THE EDGES!

SUDDENLY, A FIGURE BOBBED UP NEAR THE PITCHING LIFEBOAT...

IT'S JENSEN! HERE, JENSEN! HERE! OVER THIS WAY!

NO! WE'VE NO ROOM! ONE MORE AND WE'LL SURELY BE SWAMPED!

FOR GOD'S SAKE, MR. MACY!

JENSEN REACHED THE LIFEBOAT AFTER A HARD STRUGGLE! AS HIS HANDS CLASPED ITS SIDES...
NO MORE ROOM! NO MORE...
SIT DOWN, MR. MACY! SIT...

GREGORY'S HEEL CAME DOWN ON THE EXHAUSTED CREW MEMBER'S FINGERS! AGAIN AND AGAIN HE STAMPED...
NO MORE ROOM! GO AWAY! WE'LL... WE'LL ALL DROWN!

FINALLY JENSEN'S RAW AND BLOODY FINGERS SLIPPED FROM THE GUNNELS AND HE DISAPPEARED BELOW THE SURFACE! CAPTAIN HESTON SCREAMED AT MACY...
A GENTLEMAN IS ALWAYS A GENTLEMAN, EH, YOU MURDERER?
THIS IS DIFFERENT! IT WAS OUR LIVES OR HIS! MANY... FOR ONE!

ANOTHER FIGURE APPEARED AT THE LIFEBOAT'S SIDE! CHARLES SEIZED AN OAR...
IT'S GILPEN...
LOOK OUT!
YAP!

THE OAR SPLINTERED AS IT STRUCK GILPEN'S HEAD! CHARLES TEETERED, THEN LOST HIS BALANCE! THE LIFE-BOAT TIPPED! WATER POURED OVER ITS SIDE! SUDDENLY...
YAAAAAAAAAH!
WE'RE GOING OVER!

CHARLES WARREN, GASPING FOR BREATH, FINALLY REACHED THE SMALL PIECE OF FLOATING DEBRIS...

GASP... THANK GOD! I...I *COULDN'T* HAVE LASTED MUCH *LONGER!*

SUDDENLY ANOTHER SWIMMING FIGURE MOVED OUT OF THE FOG TOWARDS HIM...

CHARLES! GASP! IT'S *ME! GREG!*

KEEP *AWAY*, GREG! *KEEP AWAY!* THIS IS *MY* PIECE OF WOOD! IT'S NOT *BIG* ENOUGH TO HOLD *TWO* OF US!

CHARLES! *PLEASE!* I'M...I'M *EXHAUSTED!*

NO! GO FIND YOUR *OWN!*

ALL RIGHT! I...I... *WILL!*

GREGORY MACY LUNGED AT HIS PARTNER! HIS FINGERS CLOSED ABOUT CHARLES'S THROAT...

I'VE...GASP...*FOUND* IT! I'M...GOING...TO TAKE IT...AWAY...FROM *YOU!*

OOURRGHHHH!

THE STRUGGLE LASTED FOR FIVE MINUTES...MAYBE MORE! FINALLY, CHARLES'S BODY WENT LIMP! IT SLIPPED FROM GREG'S FINGERS AND SUNK BELOW THE WAVES! GREG LOOKED AROUND...

OH, LORD! THE PIECE OF *DRIFTWOOD!* IT...IT'S *GONE!*

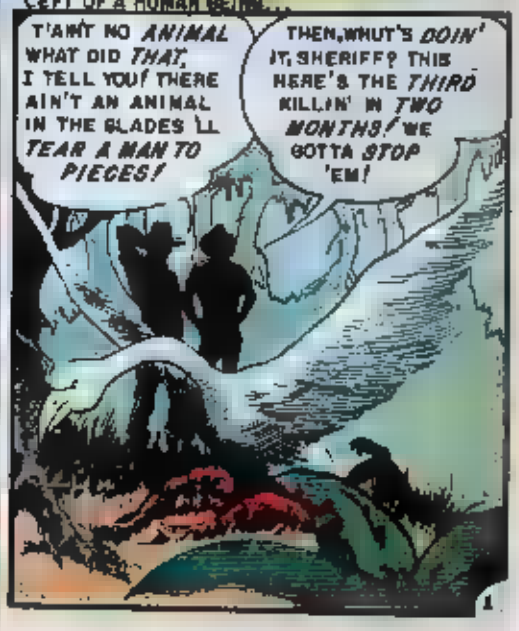
YES! WHILE GREGORY AND CHARLES WERE FIGHTING, THE PIECE OF DRIFTWOOD HAD FLOATED OFF INTO THE THICK FOG! POOR GREG WAS TOO TIRED TO EVEN *TRY* TO LOOK FOR IT! HE JUST *GURGLED* A LITTLE...AND *SANK* FROM SIGHT! EVEN THE *RATS* HAD A *BETTER DEAL* THAN *GREG!* AT LEAST, WHEN *THEY* WON, THE *PLATFORM* WAS *STILL THERE!* AND I SEE THAT THE *VAULT-KEEPER* IS *STILL THERE*, WAITING TO TELL *HIS* HORROR STORY! BUT *I* WON'T *DIE YOU LATER*, AS *USUAL!* *INSTEAD*, THOSE TWO *NIDIOTS*, *MY EDITORS*, HAVE COMMANDEERED MY SPACE FOR THEIR *OWN* USE! *HMMPH!* 'BYE! OOOOH, I'M *SO* MAD!

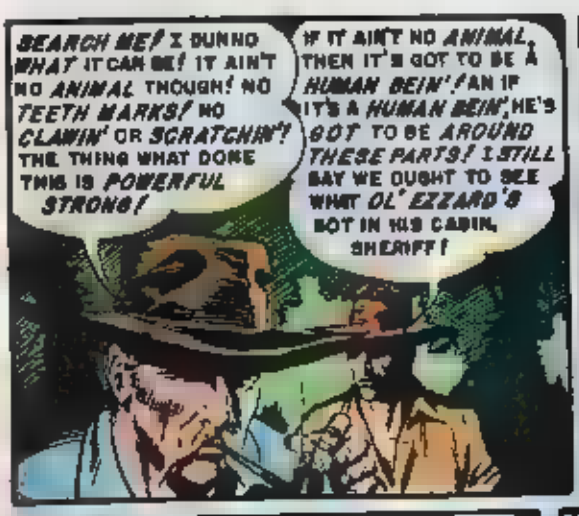
THE VAULT OF HORROR!

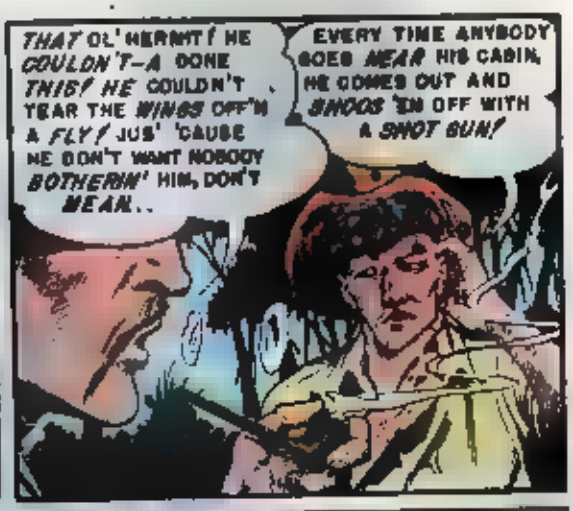
HEH, HEH! YEP, IT'S *ME* AGAIN... *THE VAULT-KEEPER!* WELCOME TO THE *VAULT OF HORROR!* I SEE THAT *C.K.* IS *PRETTY MAD* AT OUR *EGOTISTICAL EDITORS!* FRANKLY I CAN'T *BLAME* HIM! *POOR CREEP!* ALL HE'S GOT *LEFT* OF HIS MAGAZINE IS THE *LEAD SPOT* AND HIS *COLUMN!* OH, WELL! *POLITICS* IS *POLITICS!* SO ANYWAY, *I'VE* GOT TO ENTERTAIN YOU, NOW! WELL, I'VE PICKED ONE OF MY *BEST* THIS TIME... JUST TO *SHOW* THOSE TWO PUNKS! I *CALL* THIS *HORROR YARN*...

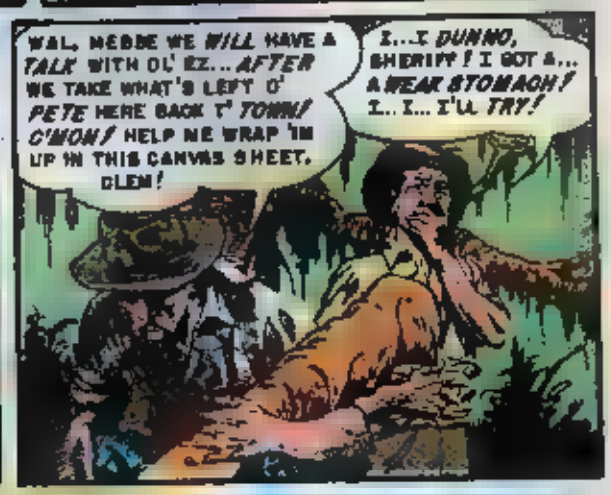
THE THING IN THE 'GLADES!

THE SHERIFF SLAPPED AT THE MOSQUITO SUCKING AT THE BACK OF HIS NECK AND CURSED! ABOVE HIS HEAD, A FLAMINGO SOARED OUT OVER THE OVERHANGING MOSS-LADEN CYPRESS TREES SURROUNDING THE EVERGLADE CLEARING! AT HIS FEET, IN A POOL OF BLOOD, LAY WHAT WAS LEFT OF A HUMAN BEING...





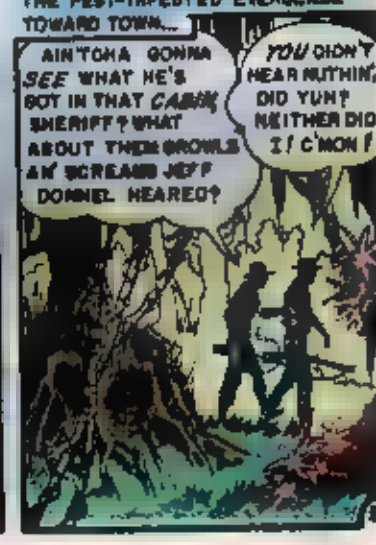


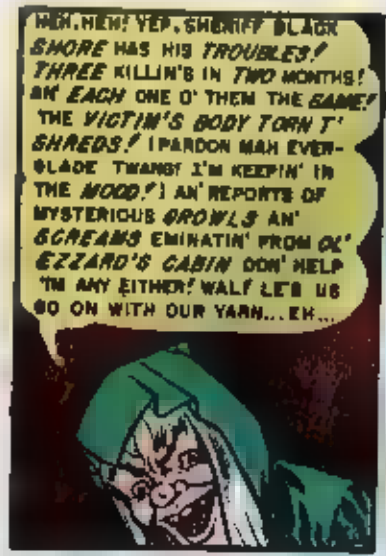


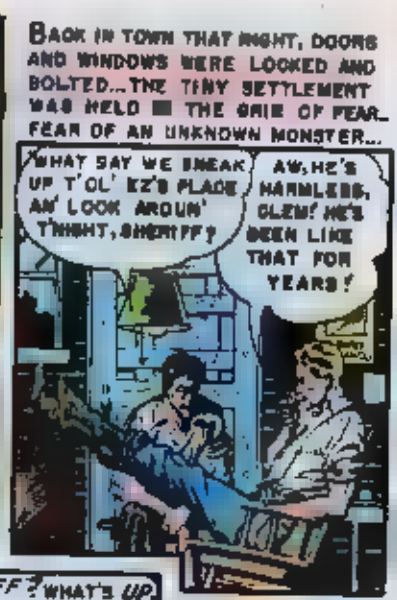
LATER THAT DAY, THE SHERIFF AND HIS DEPUTY APPROACHED OLD EZZARD'S CABIN DEEP IN THE EVERGLADES...

OLD EZZARD STOOD HIS GROUND BRANDISHING HIS DOUBLE-BARRELED WEAPON...

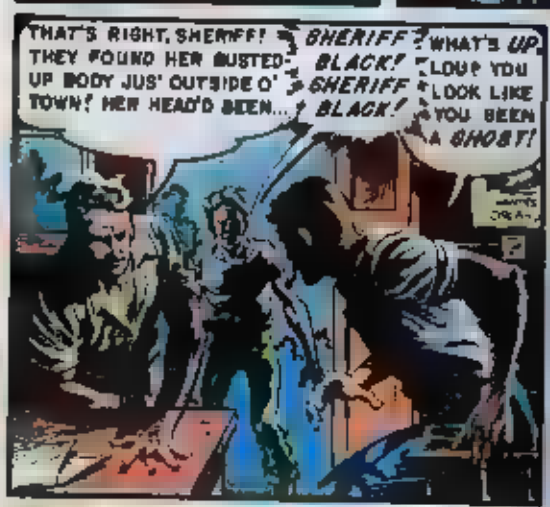
THE SHERIFF AND HIS DEPUTY MADE THEIR WAY BACK THROUGH THE PEST-INFESTED EVERGLADE TOWARD TOWN...



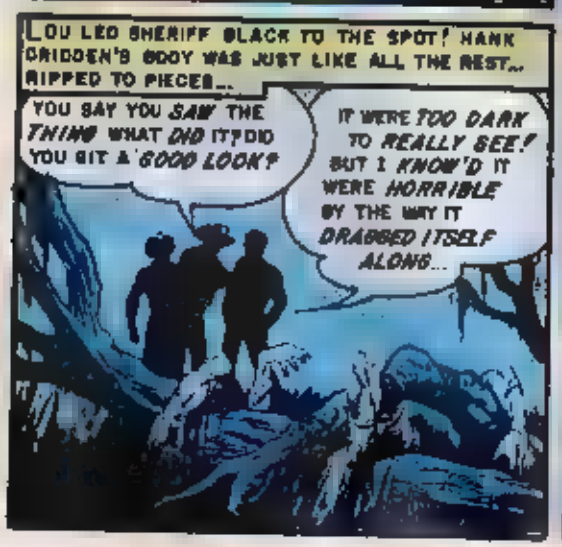

HEH, HEH! YEP, SHERIFF BLACK SHORE HAS HIS TROUBLES! THREE KILLIN'S IN TWO MONTHS! AN' EACH ONE O' THEM THE SAME! THE VICTIM'S BODY TORN T' SHREDS! (PARDON MAH EVER-BLADE TWANG! I'M KEEPIN' IN THE MOOD!) AN' REPORTS OF MYSTERIOUS GROWLS AN' SCREAMS EMINATIN' FROM OL' EZZARD'S CABIN DON' HELP 'IM ANY EITHER! WALF LE'S US GO ON WITH OUR YARN... EH...

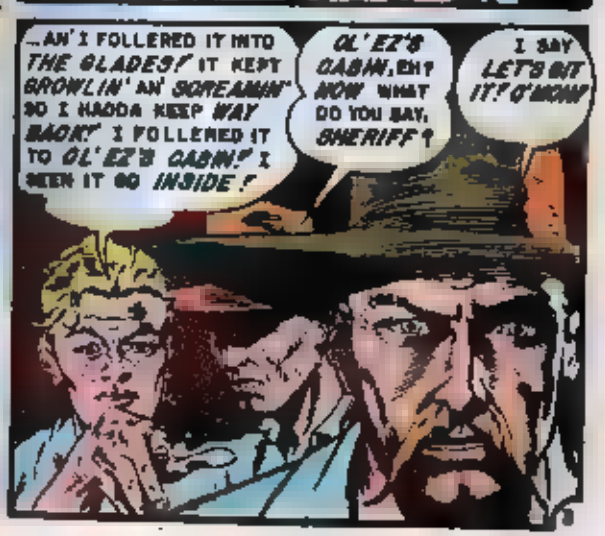

BACK IN TOWN THAT NIGHT, DOORS AND WINDOWS WERE LOCKED AND BOLTED... THE TINY SETTLEMENT WAS HELD IN THE GRIP OF FEAR... FEAR OF AN UNKNOWN MONSTER...
WHAT SAY WE SNEAK UP T'OL' EZ'S PLACE AN' LOOK AROUN' T'NIGHT, SHERIFF?
AW, HE'S HARMLESS, GLEM! HE'S BEEN LIKE THAT FOR YEARS!

ALL RIGHT! IF'N IT AIN'T HIM, THEN WHO OR WHAT IS IT?
IF'N I KNEW, WOULD I BE SITTIN' HERE THINKIN'? LE'S SEE? AMY BROWN WAR THE FIRST ONE KILT, EH, GLEM?


THAT'S RIGHT, SHERIFF! THEY FOUND HER BUSTED-UP BODY JUS' OUTSIDE O' TOWN! HER HEAD'D BEEN...
SHERIFF? BLACK! SHERIFF BLACK!
WHAT'S UP, LOU? YOU LOOK LIKE YOU BEEN A GHOST!

WORSE! I JUS' SEEN HANK CRIDDEN GIT HIS! IT WAR HORRIBLE... GASP... HORRIBLE! THIS... THIS THING, THIS I DON' KNOW WHAT... JUMPED 'IM JUS' BACK O' MY HOUSE! I HEARD 'IM SCREAM AN' I GONE A-RUNNIN'! HE WAR DEAD WHEN I GOT THERE!
TAKE ME THERE, LOU!


LOU LED SHERIFF BLACK TO THE SPOT! HANK CRIDDEN'S BODY WAS JUST LIKE ALL THE REST... RIPPED TO PIECES...
YOU SAY YOU SAW THE THING WHAT DID IT? DID YOU GIT A GOOD LOOK?
IT WERE TOO DARK TO REALLY SEE! BUT I KNOW'D IT WERE HORRIBLE BY THE WAY IT DRAGGED ITSELF ALONG...


...AN' I FOLLERED IT INTO THE GLADES! IT KEPT GROWLIN' AN' SCREAMIN' SO I HADDA KEEP WAY BACK! I FOLLERED IT TO OL' EZ'S CABIN! I SEEN IT GO INSIDE!
OL' EZ'S CABIN, EH? NOW WHAT DO YOU SAY, SHERIFF?
I SAY LET'S GIT IT! C'MON!

LOU, THE SHERIFF, AND OLEN MADE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE EVERGLADE UNDERGROWTH TO OLD EZZARD'S CABIN! AS THEY NEARED THE CLEARING, OLD EZ STEPPED OUT INTO THE MOONLIGHT...HIS SHOTGUN POINTING...

HOLD IT! DON' COME NO CLOSER!

OL' EZ!

PUT DOWN THAT GUN, EZ!

I'LL PUT DOWN THIS GUN WHEN YOR ON YOR WAY, SHERIFF! NOW, GIT!

I'LL GIT, EZ... BUT I'M TAKIN' THAT THING YOU GOT IN THAT CABIN WITH ME!

I...I DON' KNOW WHAT YOR TALKIN' ABOUT! GIT!

I'M TALKIN' ABOUT THAT THING WHAT'S MURDERED FOUR PEOPLE ALREADY! LOU HERE SEEN IT KILL HANK GRIDDEN! HE FOLLERED IT BACK TO YOUR CABIN! I'M TAKIN' IT IN, EZ!

THE OLD HERMIT'S EYES FILLED WITH TEARS...

NO! I WON'T LET YOU! HE... HE DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT NOBODY! I WON'T LET YOU TAKE HIM AWAY FROM ME! HE'S ALL I GOT! MY ONLY SON!

YOUR...YOUR SON? BUT I THOUGHT YOUR WIFE DIED ■ CHILDBIRTH... TWENTY YEARS AGO...AN' THAT THE BABY DIED TOO!

YEP! ANY DIED! BUT THE BABY DIDN'T! ONLY I KEPT IT A SECRET! THE BABY WAS DEFORMED! THAT'S WHY I MOVED OUT HERE...T' THE GLADES! I DIDN'T WANT NOBODY TO KNOW ABOUT HIM!

HAVIN' A DEFORMITY AIN'T NO EXCUSE FOR MURDER, EZ!

THE LOWER PART ■ HIS BODY WAS ALL SHRIVELED! AS HE GREW YEAR, BY YEAR, THE SHRIVELED PART OF HIS BODY JUS NEVER SEEMED TO DEVELOP! INSTEAD, HIS UPPER BODY GREW BIG AND MUSCULAR...AND HAIRY! BUT HIS BRAIN... HIS BRAIN WAS LIKE THE LOWER HALF! IT NEVER DEVELOPED EITHER...

YOU MEAN HE'S... CRAZY!

NO! DON'T SAY THAT! IT'S JUS THAT HE THINKS LIKE A CHILD! HE...HE WANTS TO PLAY! ONLY HIS BIG ARMS ARE TOO STRONG TO PLAY! HE...HE TEARS THINGS APART! BUT HE'LL LEARN! I'LL TEACH HIM!

ONE SIDE, EZ! SON OR NO SON, HE'S A KILLER! I'M BRINGIN' HIM INTO TOWN TO STAND TRIAL!

OLD [redacted] LIFTED HIS GUN...

NO, YOU DON'T! NOBODY'S TAKIN' HIM AWAY FROM ME! I'LL KILL YOU FIRST! GO ON, SHERIFF! GO ON BACK TO TOWN AN' LEAVE US BE!

YOU'RE MAKIN' A BIG MIS-TAKE, EZ! HARBORIN' A CRIMINAL IS A CRIME TOO, Y'KNOW! C'MON, BOYS!

THE SHERIFF, HIS DEPUTY, AND LOU TURNED AND STARTED BACK INTO THE GLADES...

...AN' NEXT TIME YOU SHOW YOR FACE 'ROUND HERE... ANY OF YUH... I'LL SHOOT WITHOUT WARNIN'!

YOU ASKED FOR IT, EZ! IF IT'S A FIGHT YUH WANT... YOU'LL GIT IT!

THE THREE MEN MOVED IN SILENCE... THROUGH THE MOON-LIGHT! SUDDENLY, A DISTANT SCREAM ECHOED THROUGH THE HOT DAMP NIGHT AIR...

WHAT WAS THAT?

CAME FROM OL' EZ'S CABIN!

THEY STARTED BACK TOWARDS THE HERMIT'S CABIN! SUDDENLY, THEY HEARD A CRASHING IN THE UNDER-GROWTH AHEAD OF THEM! OLD EZZARD BURST UPON THEM, HIS CLOTHES SOAKED WITH BLOOD! ONE OF HIS SLEEVES WAS EMPTY...

HE... HE... HE'S AFTER ME!

GOOD LORD! LOOK AT HIM!

OLD [redacted] PITCHED FORWARD ON HIS FACE! THE SHERIFF STOOPED OVER HIM...

YOU... YOU WERE RIGHT... SHERIFF! HE... HE IS A KILLER! I... I TRIED! I... I... I WAS WRONG!

SHERIFF! LISTEN!

SOMETHING WAS COMING! SOMETHING WAS TEARING THROUGH THE UNDERBRUSH TOWARD THEM...

EZ! EZ! HE... HE'S DEAD! HE BLED TO DEATH!

SHERIFF! IT'S COMING!

I... I'M SCARED!

A GROWL ECHOED INTO THE NIGHT... THEN A SCREAM! IT BURST FROM THE UNDERBRUSH! THE THREE MEN STARED AT THE HIDEOUS CREATURE...

H-HOLY... JUMPIN' CATFISH!

GOOD LORD!

YAAAAAAH!

THE THING HESITATED FOR A MOMENT, ITS SHRIVELED BODY SWAYING! IT STOOD BALANCED UPON ITS IMMENSE HAIRY ARMS... ITS FIERY EYES BURNING BENEATH THE SHAGGY HAIR THAT FELL OVER ITS LEERING FACE! A LOW GROWL RUMBLED FROM ITS THROAT...

KILL IT! FOR PETE'S SAKE! KILL IT!

LOOK OUT!

THE THING SPRUNG AT GLEN AS HE LIFTED HIS RIFLE TO HIS SHOULDER! THE GUN SPUN FROM HIS HANDS! LOU FIRED INTO THE LUMBERING HULK AS IT ATTACKED THE TERRIFIED DEPUTY...

GLEN WENT DOWN IN A CRUMPLED HEAP AS LOU FIRED AGAIN AND AGAIN! IT TURNED TOWARD HIM, SCREAMING...

RUN, LOU! RUN!

BULLETS... DON'T KILL IT!

SHERIFF BLACK STARTED OFF INTO THE UNDERBRUSH! THE THING WAS UPON LOU BEFORE HE COULD ESCAPE!

SHERIFF! SHERIFF!

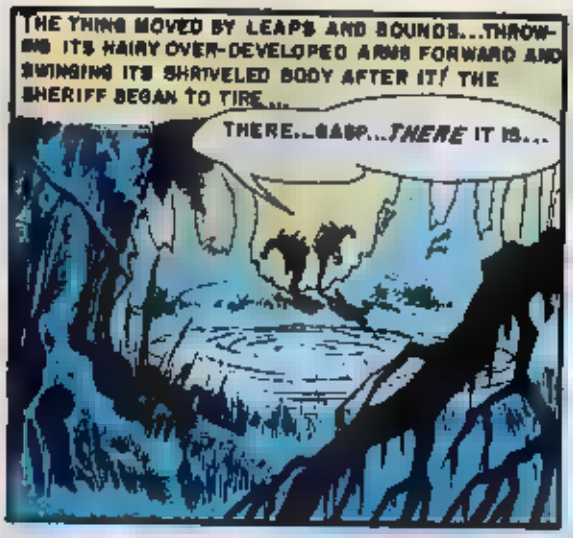
EEEEEEEEEEE!

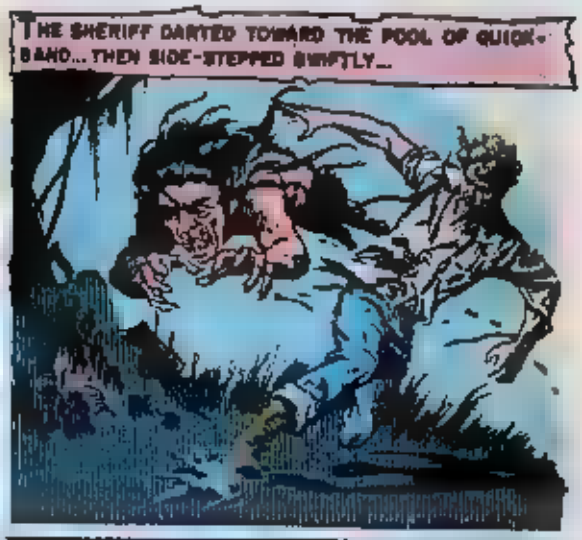
THE THING STARTED AFTER THE SHERIFF! IT TRAVELED UPON ITS HUGE ARMS... SWINGING ITS WITHERED BODY FORWARD...

IT...IT'S AFTER ME! I... I'VE GOT TO OUTSMART IT!.

THE THING MOVED FAST... FASTER THAN THE SHERIFF COULD RUN! THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM CLOSED UP...

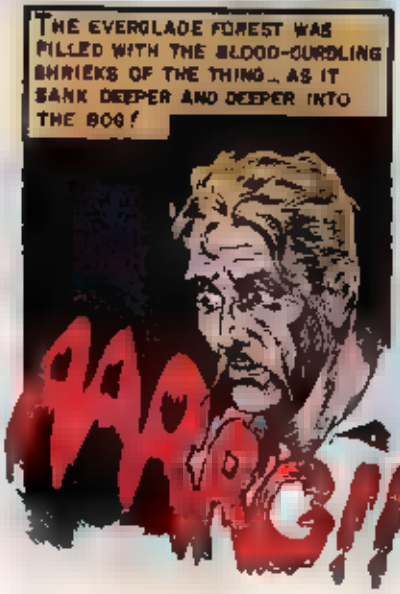
GASPS THE BOG! IF I COULD...GET TO THE BOG OF QUICKSAND...


THE THING MOVED BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS...THROWING ITS HAIRY OVER-DEVELOPED ARMS FORWARD AND SWINGING ITS SHRIVELED BODY AFTER IT! THE SHERIFF BEGAN TO TIRE...
THERE...GASP...THERE IT IS...

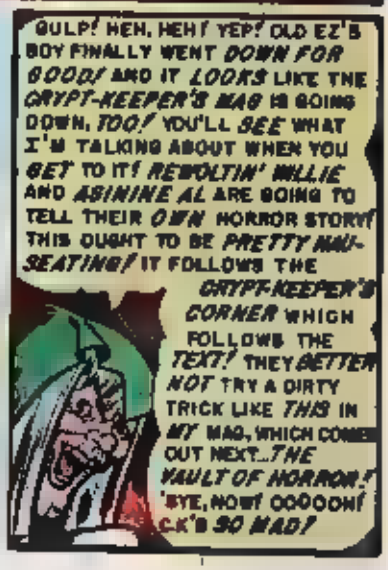

THE SHERIFF DARTED TOWARD THE POOL OF QUICKSAND...THEN SIDE-STEPPED SWIFTLY...

THE THING LEAPED FORWARD...INTO THE SUCKING BOG! IT SCREAMED IN DISMAY...
JUST...GASP... JUST IN TIME!

WILDLY IT THRASHED AROUND TRYING TO FREE ITSELF FROM THE QUICKSAND! THE MORE IT STRUGGLED...THE FASTER IT SANK INTO THE DRAWING QUAGMIRE...
IT...IT'S HORRIBLE! HORRIBLE!


THE EVERGLADE FOREST WAS FILLED WITH THE BLOOD-CURDLING SHRIEKS OF THE THING... AS IT SANK DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE BOG!
AAAGH!

FINALLY ITS CRIES DIED IN A CHOKING GURGLE AS ITS HEAD SUBMERGED! A HAIRY HAND WAS THE LAST TO SINK BELOW THE QUICKSAND POOL'S SURFACE... CLAWING AT THE DANK, DARK NIGHT...


GULP! HEH, HEH! YEP! OLD EZ'S BOY FINALLY WENT DOWN FOR GOOD! AND IT LOOKS LIKE THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S MAG IS GOING DOWN, TOO! YOU'LL SEE WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT WHEN YOU GET TO IT! REVOLTIN' WILLIE AND ASININE AL ARE GOING TO TELL THEIR OWN HORROR STORY! THIS OUGHT TO BE PRETTY NAUSEATING! IT FOLLOWS THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S CORNER WHICH FOLLOWS THE TEXT! THEY BETTER NOT TRY A DIRTY TRICK LIKE THIS IN MY MAG, WHICH COMES OUT NEXT...THE VAULT OF HORROR! 'BYE, NOW! OOOOOH! C.K'S SO MAD!

SOFT!

Through the hayloft window, Harry watched the "old man" working on the wagon below. Pressing up against the rafters at the corner of the wooden structure, the young farm hand could see his grey-haired boss thrust the pitchfork deep into the crackly yellow hay and loft it up to the open second-story door with one mighty heave. *He's strong as a bull*, Harry reflected, watching the older man sweating there on the haymow. *A lot stronger'n the average 60 year-old geezer! Only his strength ain't gonna help him any TODAY, 'cause he's gonna die sure as shooting!*

Looking down from the loft now, Harry thought: *he knows I stole that money out'n his desk drawer . . . he's just been toying with me to get me rattled! Wants me to get down on my hands and knees and beg for mercy, or turn tail and run like a scared rabbit! That cussed old man is out to show he's stronger'n I am! Ever since I come here to work for him, he's been trying to prove I'm yeller . . . to show the world that even though everyone but the Law knows he killed my paw, I ain't got the guts to settle with him!*

Still staring down from the top of the hayloft, Harry went over in his mind for the twentieth time that hour the plan he had devised after 2 sleepless nights of tossing and turning. *Getting the old man up here oughtta be easy*, the youth thought . . . *since he don't trust me much anyway, he'll prob'ly wanna check to make sure I'm not stealing any of his dang hay! And once he comes up that ladder, his goose is cooked! Killing 'im and getting away with it . . . the way I've planned it . . . should be a soft touch!*

The young man stepped up to the open window and, cupping his hands around his mouth, shouted:

"M-Mr. Malcolm! Some of the hay up here seems to've caught FIRE! I've tried to put it out myself but it's kinda getting outta control . . . !"

With a smile of satisfaction, Harry saw the old man toss his pitchfork down into the mound of hay and look toward the loft apprehensively. Then the grey-haired employer leaped down from the haystack and ran frantically toward the barn entrance. *That's got 'im!* Harry gloated, looking once toward the farm house on the hill to make sure that the rest of the Malcolm clan hadn't unexpectedly come back from town where they had all gone for the day. *From now on*, Harry thought, *it'll be SOFT!*

30 seconds later, as the old man's head appeared above the top of the ladder, Harry brought the hammer down with stunning force. His boss tottered for a moment, but Harry leaned far forward and dragged him up onto the loft floor. Then, with repeated blows of the already bloody hammer, he savagely crushed the old man's skull.

A moment later Harry straightened up and leered down in triumph at his victim. "A match tossed into the hay up here," he said aloud, "will set this place afire in a minute! And by the time anyone's able to help me put out the blaze, you'll be so roasted that NO ONE'll be able to tell the fire didn't kill you!" A flame leaped up from the match which Harry scraped across the rough floor: without a flicker of emotion, Harry tossed it into the hay.

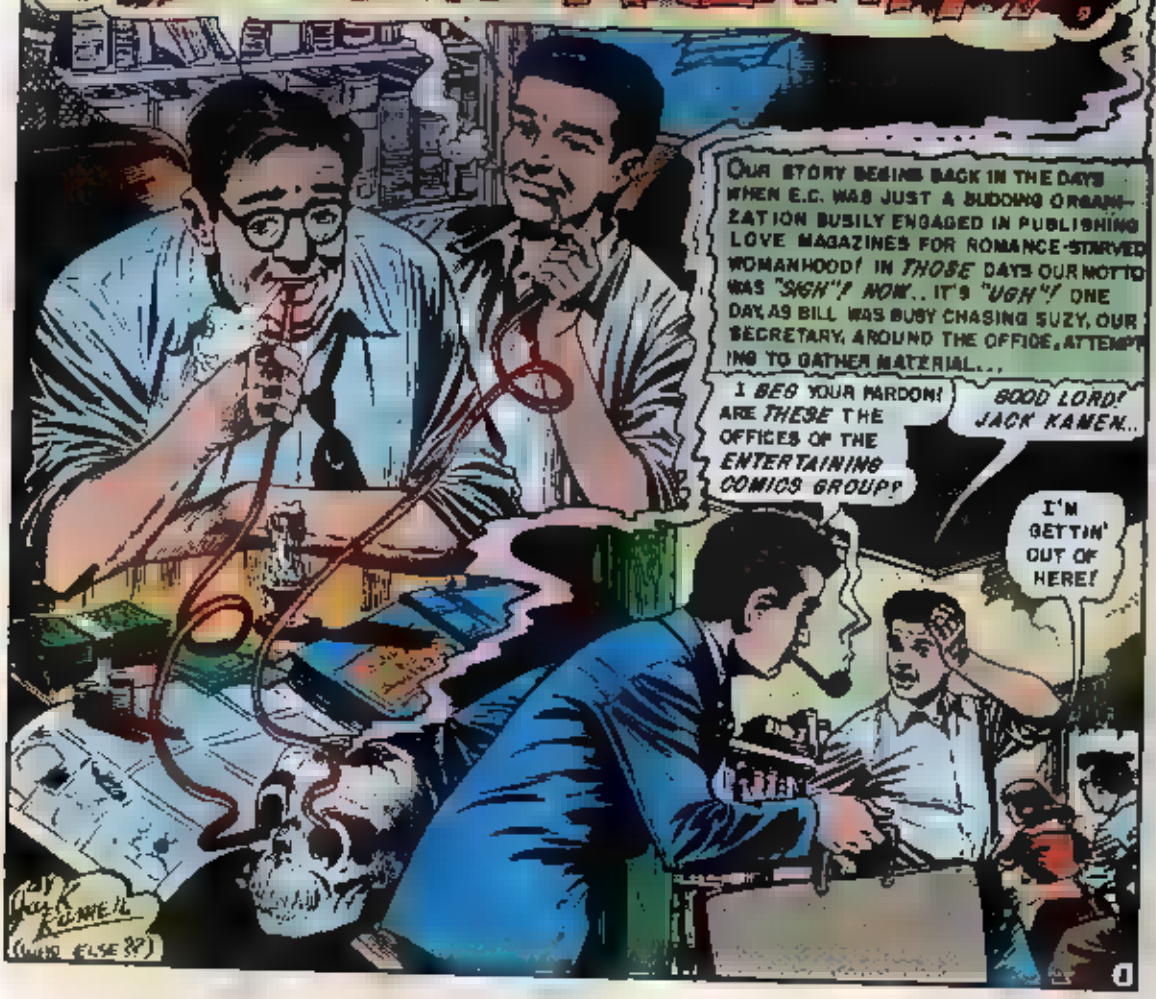
"So long old timer," he said as he moved toward the open second-story door. "I've got a date to jump into that hay you were throwing up here! It's a 35 foot drop . . . but compared to what happened to YOU, my landing'll be *SOFT!*

And with that, Harry leaped toward the haymow. 35 feet he plummeted down, and his landing was somewhat different from what he had planned. For, in the very same moment that he felt a spasm of pain shudder agonizingly through his body from his feet to his shattered jaw . . . felt his stomach wall ripped wide open and his insides spilling out wetly onto the sun-warmed hay . . . Harry knew that he had impaled himself on the murderous edges of the pitchfork which old Malcolm had left behind him on the wagon!

THE DEN OF INIQUITY!

HO, HO! FOND FELICITATIONS, FANS! YEP, IT'S US... *THE DEN-KEEPERS*... YOUR EDITORS, *BILL* AND *ALF* IN THIS ISSUE OF *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*, THE *CRYPT-KEEPER* HAS CHEERFULLY (*THAT'S* A LAUGH! WE HAD TO THREATEN TO CUT OFF HIS SUPPLY OF *CADAVERS!*) CONSENTED TO OUR APPEARING IN THE FLABBY FLESH TO PERSONALLY TELL YOU OUR VERY OWN HORROR STORY! SO COME CLOSER TO THE ELECTRIC-HEATER... SIT YOURSELF DOWN ON THAT ROTTED OLD TEXT-WRITER... AND WE'LL HAND OUT A YARN FROM OUR TRASH-BASKET (ALL OF OUR STORIES ARE TRASH!) THAT WE AFFECTIONATELY CALL...

KAMEN'S KALAMITY!

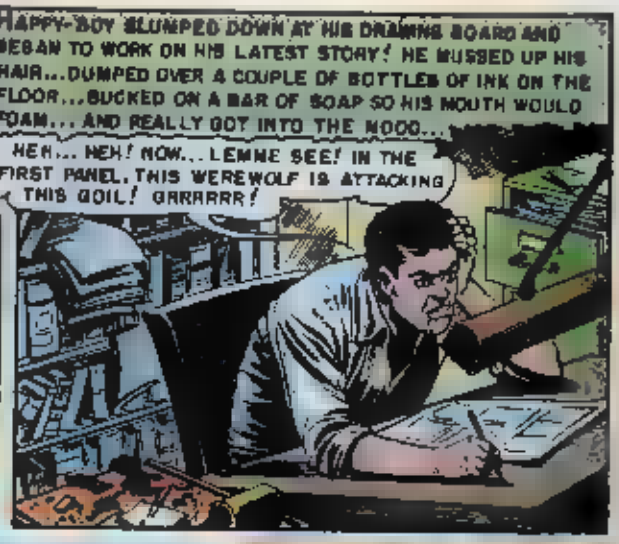


HE STOOD THERE, NATTILY DRESSED IN A COAT BEDECKED WITH GAYS, GRINNING LIKE A CHESHIRE CAT... JACK (HAPPY-BOY) KAMEN!
WELL, KNOCK ME OVER WITH A FAT CHECK, IF IT ISN'T AL (STIFF-FIGURED) FELDSTEIN!
JACK! YOU OLD BOY! I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU FOR TWO TRENDS! HEY, BILL! C'MERE AN' MEET JACK (D'JA EVER HEAR THE ONE ABOUT...) KAMEN!
PUFF... PUFF! I'M... PUFF... BUSY!
BUT THIS BOY IS THE BEST LOVE ARTIST IN THE BUSINESS... EXCEPT FOR ME, OF COURSE!
OH! WANNA JOB? WANNA MAKE BIG MONEY?
I'M NOT HERE SOCIALLY!
FRIENDLY OL' JACK! NEVER CHANGES!
CAN 'E DRAW GIRLS, AL?
CAN HE? WHY THIS BOY IS... LET ME TELL YOU... IF EVER... HE'S TERRIFIC!
FLATTERY WILL GET YOU NOWHERE! I EXPECT TO GET PAID!
I ADMIRE THE FRANKNESS OF THIS CHARMING AND JOVIAL YOUNG FELLOW... WHO ALSO HAPPENS TO BE A FRIEND OF YOURS, AL... SO HIRE HIM!
JACK! YOU'RE HIRED!
I CAN HEAR! HOW MUCH?
JACK! THIS IS AN UP-AND-COMING ORGANIZATION! YOU'LL HAVE A GREAT FUTURE WITH US! WHY IN A FEW YEARS...
WHAT DO I GET NOW?
TELL HIM, AL!
JACK WAS TOLD, BUT HE CAME TO WORK FOR US ANYHOW! AND HIS WORK WAS...
BEAUTIFUL! WHAT SWEET PATHOS! WHAT SINCERE...
HEY! D'JA EVER HEAR THE JOKE ABOUT THE JOCKEY...?
NOT NOW, JACK! RUN ALONG! WE'RE BUSY!

NO, NO! YEP! THAT'S HOW IT BEGAN! JACK (HAPPY-BOY) KAMEN CAME TO WORK FOR E.C., TURNING OUT SWEET CHARMING LITTLE LOVE TALES ABOUT SWEET CHARMING PEOPLE IN SWEET CHARMING SITUATIONS! HIS STUFF WAS... THAT'S RIGHT... SWEET AN' CHARMING! THEN TRAGEDY STRUCK AT E.C....
WE'RE RUINED, AL! OUR LOVE BOOKS ARE SELLING 2 %! WE'LL BE BROKE IN A MONTH!
WHAT ABOUT THOSE THREE BOOKS WE WERE FORCED TO PUT OUT BY THOSE CHARACTERS WE MET IN THE SEWER?! Y' KNOW! THE CRYPT OF SOMETHIN', ETC.!
WAIT, I'LL CHECK! GOOD.. LORD! SOMEBODY'S BUYIN' THAT HORROR STUFF! LOOK!
HEY! THEY MADE MONEY! ALMOST TEN DOLLARS EACH! WE'RE RICH!
*SEE HAUNT OF FEAR 12. (NO BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE)...'HORROR BENEATH THE STREETS'!
SO WHEN JACK (HAPPY-BOY) CAME IN (THAT'S A PUN, SON!) WITH HIS LATEST LOVE-STORY, WE BROKE THE SAD NEWS...
WELL, HERE I AM! AND HAVE I GOT A STORY FOR YOU! LISTEN! D'JA EVER HEAR'...
NOT NOW, JACK!
BAD NEWS, JACK! LOVE IS THROUGH! FROM NOW ON, IT'S HORROR!
HORROR? GULP!
YEP! AND HERE'S YOUR FIRST YARN! IT'S ABOUT THIS VAMPIRE, SEE? ONE DAY...
PUFF.. PUFF..
I'M GETTIN' OUT OF HERE!
SO JACK SET TO WORK ON HIS FIRST HORROR STORY! A WEEK LATER..
WELL, HERE IT IS! AND WHILE YOU'RE LOOKING IT OVER... D'JA EVER HEAR THE JOKE ABOUT...
NOT NOW, JACK!
AWFUL! TERRIBLE! WHO EVER HEARD OF A CHARMING... SWEET-LOOKING VAMPIRE!
JACK! IT AIN'T HORRIBLE ENOUGH!
SO I AIN'T A HORRIBLE PERSON! NOW GET THIS! THESE THREE GUYS ARE FLOATIN' DOWN A RIVER ON A MARBLE SLAB...
YOU GOTTA DO SOMETHIN', JACK! YOU GOTTA DRAW MORE HORRIBLE! NOW IN YOUR NEXT JOB, THERE'S THIS WEREWOLF, SEE?...

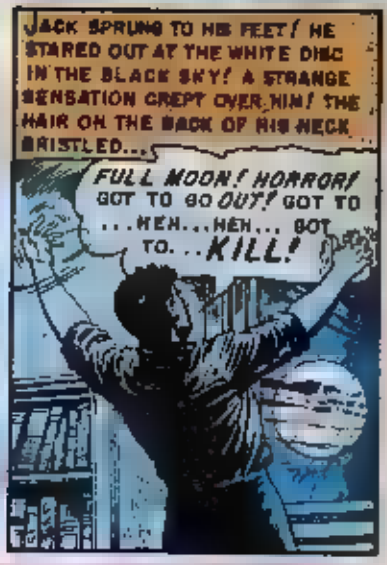
BUT IT DIDN'T DO ANY GOOD! JACK'S STUFF KEPT COMIN' IN SWEET AN' CHARMING! WE TRIED EVERY TRICK WE KNEW...
WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?
POOR AL! SOME MAD-MAN...
BUT HAPPY-BOY JUST WOULDN'T GET HORRIFIED! HE WAS TOO HAPPY...
GEE, AL! MAYBE A GOOD JOKE'LL CHEER YOU UP! THERE WAS THESE TWO MORONS
OH, NOT NOW, JACK!
FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD, JACK...
CAN'T YA BE LIKE GHASTLY GRAHAM INGLES THERE! LOOK HOW HE'S FALLEN INTO THE SPIRIT...
CHOMP... CHOMP...
YEAH! OR ORAIG! LOOKA HIM!
HEH, HEH
OR DAVIS! NOW THERE'S A BOY WHAT'S REALLY GOT THE FEELIN'
YUK...YUK... YUK...YOU ALL...
MAYBE THE SIGHT OF THOSE THREE SUCCESSFUL HORROR ARTISTS CONVINCED JACK...
OKAY! OKAY! I'M GONNA BE HORRIBLE! YOU'LL SEE! YOU'LL SEE!
SO JACK COMMUTED BACK TO HIS SWEET AND CHARMING SUBURBAN HOME...HIS MIND MADE UP! HIS SWEET AND CHARMING WIFE AND HIS TWO SWEET AND CHARMING BOYS MET HIM AS HE CAME UP THE WALK...
HELLO, DEAR! HOW DID IT GO TODAY?
G-R-R-R-R-R!
WHY, WHAT'S WRONG, JACK, DEAR?
SHADDUP! AN' HOW COME THE BLINDS AREN'T DRAWN? STOP WEEDIN' THE GARDEN! LET THIS GRASS GROW! THIS PLACE LOOKS TOO CHARMING!
GIGGLE...GIGGLE! DADDY FUNNY, HUH, MOMMY?

JACK HAD MADE UP HIS MIND! HE STAMPED INTO THE HOUSE AND UP TO HIS SWEET AND CHARMING STUDIO...
SO I'M NOT HORRIBLE ENOUGH, EH? WELL, I'LL SHOW 'EM! G-R-R-R-R!

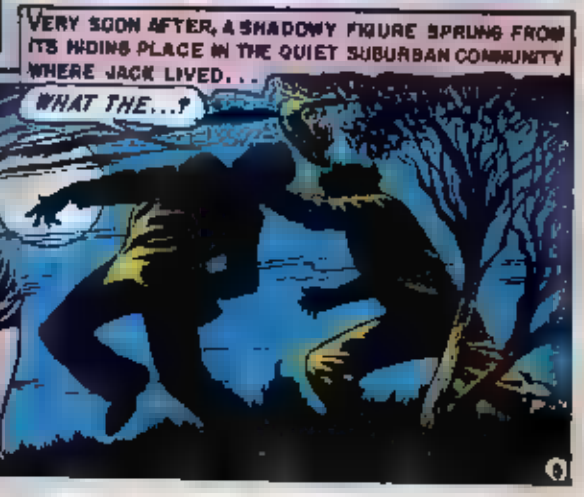

HAPPY-BOY SLUMPED DOWN AT HIS DRAWING BOARD AND BEGAN TO WORK ON HIS LATEST STORY! HE MUSSED UP HIS HAIR...DUMPED OVER A COUPLE OF BOTTLES OF INK ON THE FLOOR...SUCKED ON A BAR OF SOAP SO HIS MOUTH WOULD FOAM... AND REALLY GOT INTO THE MOOD...
HEH... HEH! NOW... LEMME SEE! IN THE FIRST PANEL, THIS WEREWOLF IS ATTACKING THIS GOIL! GRRRRRR!

JACK WORKED FEVERISHLY... FAR INTO THE NIGHT...
HEH, HEH, HEH...

SUDDENLY A COLD RAY OF LIGHT STREAMED IN THROUGH THE STUDIO WINDOW! JACK GLANCED UP! PERSPIRATION DRIPPED FROM HIS FACE! THE FULL MOON...
HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!


JACK SPRUNG TO HIS FEET! HE STARED OUT AT THE WHITE DISC IN THE BLACK SKY! A STRANGE SENSATION CREPT OVER HIM! THE HAIR ON THE BACK OF HIS NECK BRISTLED...
FULL MOON! HORROR! GOT TO GO OUT! GOT TO ...HEH...HEH... GOT TO...KILL!

JACK SLUNK PAST THE NURSERY WHERE THE TWO BOYS SLEPT AND SLIPPED DOWN THE STAIRS! HIS WIFE TURNED FROM HER SEWING-MACHINE...
GOING OUT, DEAR?
G-R-R-R-R-R-R!


VERY SOON AFTER, A SHADOWY FIGURE SPRUNG FROM ITS HIDING PLACE IN THE QUIET SUBURBAN COMMUNITY WHERE JACK LIVED...
WHAT THE...?

IT STOOD OVER ITS VICTIM, HOWLING UP AT THE COLD WHITE MOON...
THEN IT HURRIED BACK... BACK TO THE KAMEN RESIDENCE AS IT SWUNG THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR...
JACK! WE... WE'VE BEEN WORRIED! YOU... YOU...
G-R-R-R-R!
THEY STOOD THERE... THE THREE OF THEM... THE YOUNGER CHILD CRADLED IN HIS MOTHER'S ARMS... THE OLDER ONE TUGGING AT HER SKIRTS! THEY STOOD THERE WIDE-EYED... WATCHING THE BEAST CLOSE IN...
JACK! WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? JACK!
AND THEN THEY SCREAMED... SCREAMED IN HORROR...
EEEEEEEEEE
THE SCREAM ECHOED THROUGH THE KAMEN HOME! JACK SAT UP STRAIGHT AT HIS BOARD...
HUH? WHA... WHA... WHY, I'VE BEEN DREAMING! IT WAS NOTHING BUT A DREAM! BUT THAT SCREAM! EVELYN? DID YOU SCREAM?
YES, DEAR! I THOUGHT I SAW A MOUSE! DID I FRIGHTEN YOU?
AND THE NEXT DAY...
BUT JACK! YOU CAN'T QUIT! WE'LL DO ANYTHING... ANYTHING! WE'LL EVEN PAY YOU... IN MONEY FROM NOW ON!
YEAH! AND WE'LL EVEN LISTEN TO YOUR JOKES! GO AHEAD, TELL ONE!
WELL! LET'S SEE! D'JA EVER HEAR THE ONE...
HO, HO! YEP! JACK (HORROR-BOY) KAMEN GOT HIS TASTE OF HORROR THAT NIGHT! YOU CAN NOTICE IT IN HIS WORK! YOU WATCH CAREFULLY... THE NEXT TIME HE DRAWS A MOUSE! AND NOW... WE'LL TURN YOU OVER TO THE OLD WITCH. WHO'LL WIND UP THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S MAG! OH, BY THE WAY! IF YOU HAVEN'T SENT FOR YOUR ACTUAL PHOTO OF THOSE THREE CREEPS, THE GHOULUNATICS... DO SO! IT'LL HELP SEND OUR OFFICE BOY THROUGH COLLEGE! 'BYE!

YES, FANS... YOU, TOO, CAN BE LUCKY LIKE MELVIN, HERE! YOU, TOO, CAN COMPLETE YOUR COLLECTION OF E.C.'S! YOU, TOO, CAN OWN...

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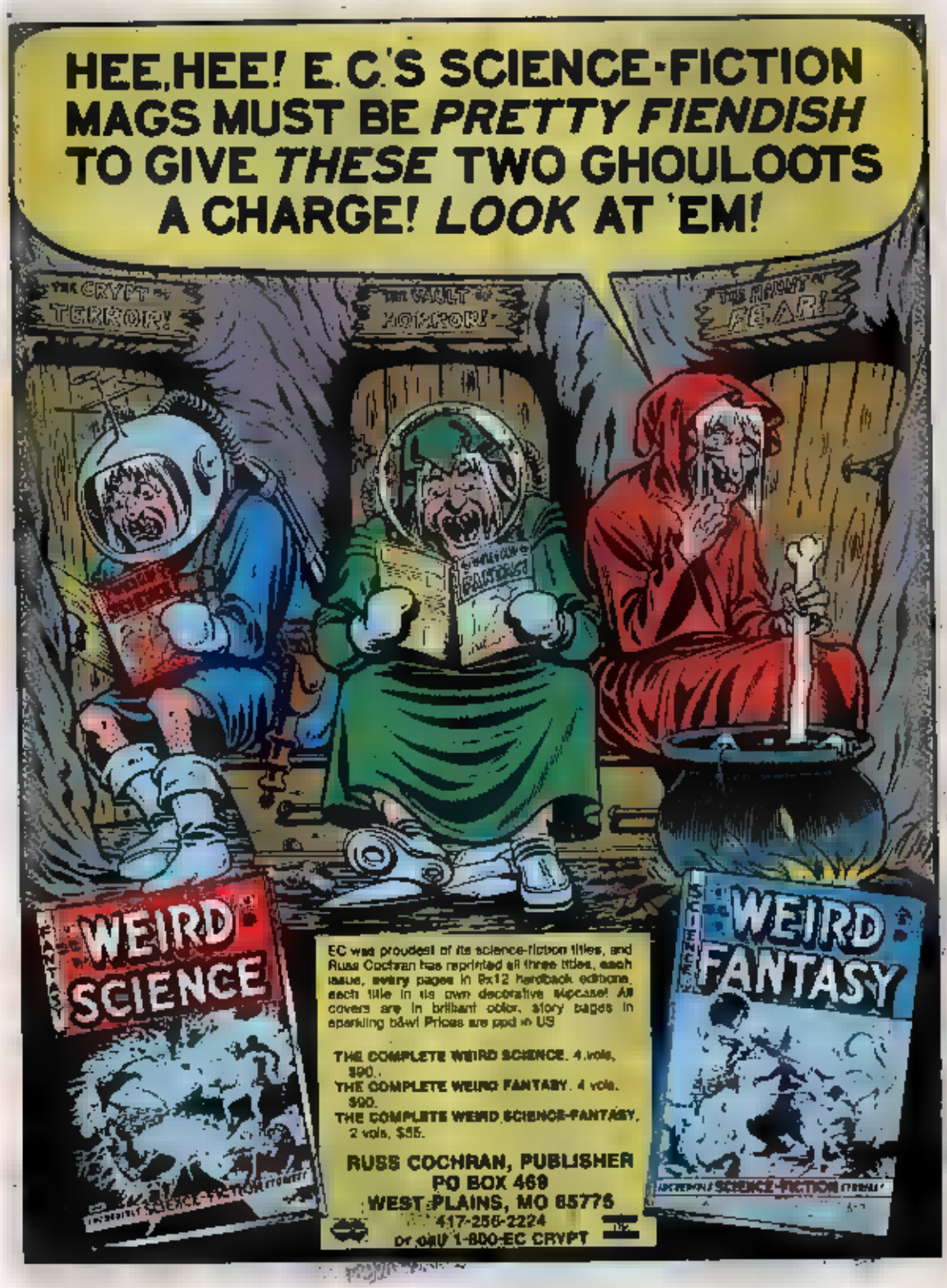
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THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! THAT *STENCH* YOU SMELL IS *NOT MY CAULDRON!* IT'S FROM THE *PRECEDING STORY!* THE *NERVE!* KILLING THE *CRYPT-KEEPER'S* MAB WITH SUCH *GARBAGE!* *HORROR STORY!* *PHEW!* NOW, *I'LL* HAVE TO *MAKE UP* FOR IT! YEP! IT'S *ME, THE OLD WITCH, MISTRESS OF THE HAUNT OF FEAR,* READY TO *SLING SLIME* FROM MY *CRUDDY CAULDRON* AGAIN! AND I'VE CHOSEN A *REAL STOMACH-TURNER* TO SERVE YOU THIS TIME! SO HERE GOES WITH THE *NEUROTIC NARRATIVE* I CALL...

BURIED TREASURE!

MY STORY BEGINS IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY GERMANY, AT THE TIME WHEN IT WAS COMPOSED OF MANY TINY PRINCIPALITIES...EACH UNDER THE RULE OF A NOBLEMAN OR A MEMBER OF THE ROYALTY! IN 1667, ONE OF THESE PRINCIPALITIES, KNOWN AS SCHLUSSDORF WAS RULED BY HEINRICH, DUKE OF SCHLUSSTEIN! HE WAS THE BLACKEST, CRUELEST TYRANT OF THEM ALL! HIS STATELY CASTLE TOWERED HIGH OVER THE VILLAGE OF SCHLUSSBERG WHERE HIS SUBJECTS, THE POOR PEASANTS WHO TILLED HIS LANDS, LIVED...

HEINRICH, DUKE OF SCHLUSSTEIN, CARED NO MORE FOR HIS SUBJECTS THAN FOR THE PEBBLES BENEATH HIS SILVER BUCKLED SLIPPERS! HE WAS A COLD, ARROGANT RULER WHO SOUGHT ONLY TO BLEED THE PEASANTS BY HOLDING THEM DOWN BENEATH THE GRINDING HEEL OF TAXATION AND OPPRESSION! THEY WOULD LOOK UP WITH EMBITTERED EYES AT THE SPLENDOR AND POMP ABOVE THEM FROM THEIR SQUALOR...

THERE IS A *FEAST* AT THE CASTLE TONIGHT!

WHILE *WE* HERE *STARVE*, THE *DUKE* AND HIS COURT *STUFF THEMSELVES!*

ONE DAY, THE PEACE OF THE VILLAGE OF SCHLUSSBERG WAS SHATTERED BY THE THUNDER OF HORSES' HOOVES AS THE DUKE'S GILDED COACH SPED DOWN FROM THE CASTLE INTO THE TOWN...

CLEAR THE STREETS!

HE'S COMING! LOOK OUT!

HANS! HANS!

AS THE SPEEDING COACH BORE DOWN THROUGH THE VILLAGE'S MAIN STREET, THE CHILD CALLED HANS STOOD PETRIFIED BEFORE THE GALLOPING HORSES...

GOOD LORD!

THE CHILD...

EEEEEEEE

...AND AS THE DUKE'S COACH DISAPPEARED IN A CLOUD OF DUST, A SMALL BOY'S BROKEN AND MANGLED BODY LAY PROSTRATE ON THE BLOOD-STAINED COBBLESTONES...

THE...THE *MURDEROUS BUTCHER!*

HE *COULD* HAVE *STOPPED!*

MY BABY! SOB...SOB... *MY BABY!*

ONE OF THE PEASANTS SHOOK HIS FIST AT THE CASTLE...

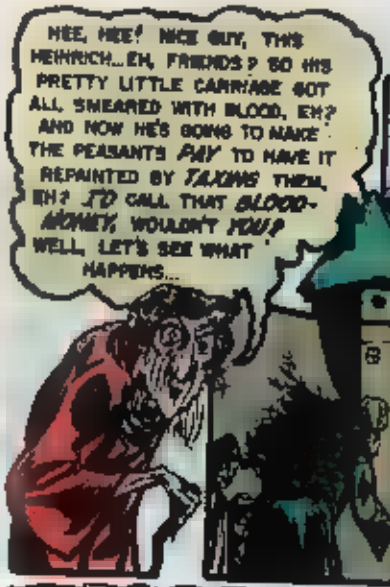
SOMEDAY...*SOMEDAY WE'LL GET YOU FOR THIS..*

SOB... SOB...

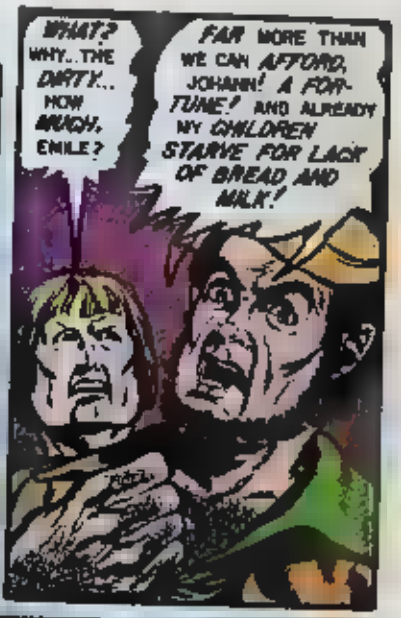
BUT TO THE DUKE OF SCHLUSSTEIN, RESPLENDENT IN HIS GILDED COACH... THE CHILD'S DEATH MEANT ONLY...

STUPID IDIOTS! NOW THE *COACH WHEELS* ARE *MARRED* WITH *BLOOD STAINS!* NOW... *DISGUSTING!*

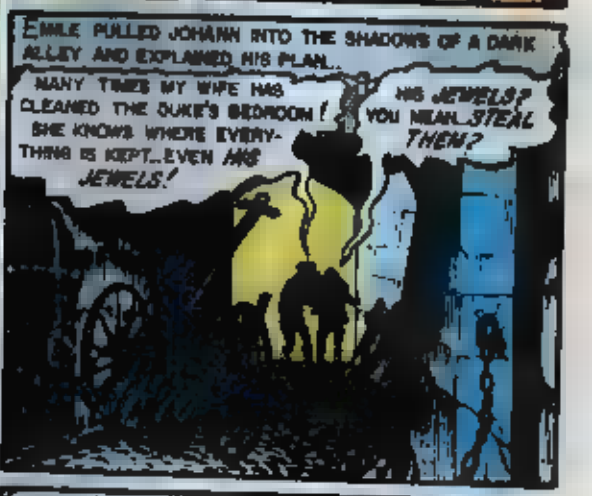
THEY MUST BE *REPAINTED!* WELL, *I'LL* NOT *PAY* FOR IT! THE *RABBLE* WILL! I'LL...I'LL *TAX* THEM FOR IT!

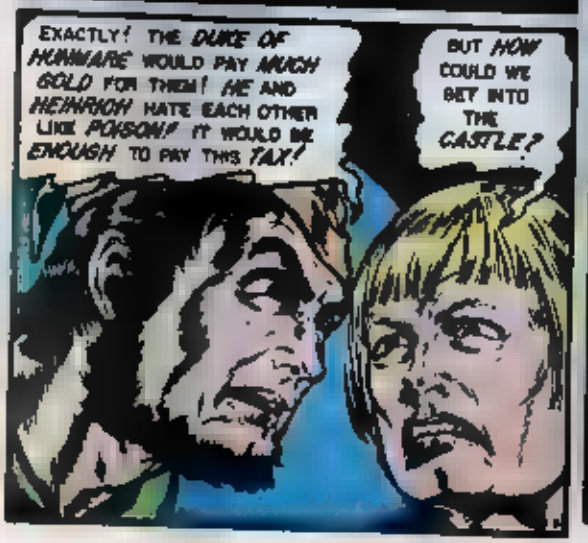

HEE, HEE! NICE GUY, THIS HEINRICH...EH, FRIENDS? SO HIS PRETTY LITTLE CARRIAGE GOT ALL SMEARED WITH BLOOD, EH? AND NOW HE'S GOING TO MAKE THE PEASANTS PAY TO HAVE IT REPAINTED BY TAXING THEM, EH? I'D CALL THAT BLOOD-MONEY, WOULDN'T YOU? WELL, LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS...

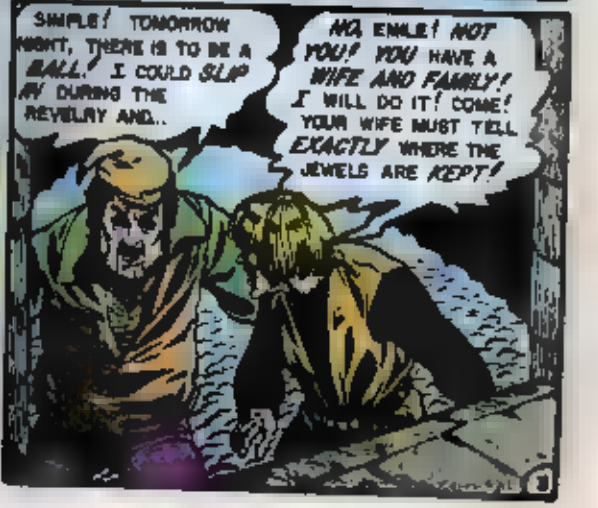
THE NEXT DAY, A NOTICE WAS PLACED IN THE VILLAGE SQUARE...
WHAT DOES IT SAY, EMILE?
IT SAYS THAT WE ARE TO BE TAXED FOR SPOILING THE DUKE'S CARRIAGE!


WHAT? WHY...THE DIRTY... HOW MUCH, EMILE?
FAR MORE THAN WE CAN AFFORD, JOHANN! A FORTUNE! AND ALREADY MY CHILDREN STARVE FOR LACK OF BREAD AND MILK!

BUT WHERE CAN WE GET THAT MUCH GOLD, EMILE?
I DO NOT KNOW, JOHANN! I DO NOT... WAIT! I HAVE IT!


EMILE PULLED JOHANN INTO THE SHADOWS OF A DARK ALLEY AND EXPLAINED HIS PLAN...
MANY TIMES MY WIFE HAS CLEANED THE DUKE'S BEDROOM! SHE KNOWS WHERE EVERYTHING IS KEPT...EVEN HIS JEWELS!
HIS JEWELS? YOU MEAN...STEAL THEM?


EXACTLY! THE DUKE OF HUNWARE WOULD PAY MUCH GOLD FOR THEM! HE AND HEINRICH HATE EACH OTHER LIKE POISON! IT WOULD BE ENOUGH TO PAY THIS TAX!
BUT HOW COULD WE GET INTO THE CASTLE?


SIMPLE! TOMORROW NIGHT, THERE IS TO BE A BALL! I COULD SLIP IN DURING THE REVELRY AND...
NO, EMILE! NOT YOU! YOU HAVE A WIFE AND FAMILY! I WILL DO IT! COME! YOUR WIFE MUST TELL EXACTLY WHERE THE JEWELS ARE KEPT!

HEE, HEE! YEP! EVEN IN THOSE DAYS THEY HAD FENCES WHERE STOLEN JEWELS COULD BE DISPOSED OF! IN THIS CASE, IT WAS AN UNFRIENDLY RULER OF A RIVAL PRINCIPALITY! SO PLANS WERE MADE...AND THE NEXT NIGHT, JOHANN CREPT UP THE MOUNTAIN TO THE CASTLE SCHLUSSTEIN...
INSIDE, THE BALL WAS UNDER WAY! LAUGHTER AND MUSIC FILLED THE AIR! THE SUCCULENT ODORS OF BROILING PHEASANTS AND ROASTING PIGS DRIFTED TOWARD THE STARVING PEASANT...
I MUST FIND A PLACE WHERE I CAN SCALE THE WALL!
SLOWLY, JOHANN CIRCLED THE CASTLE WALL, KEEPING WELL OUT OF SIGHT! FROM TIME TO TIME, HE HAD TO LIE IN THE SHRUBBERY WITHOUT BREATHING WHILE ONE OF THE DUKE'S GUARDS PASSED NOT FIVE FEET FROM HIM...
FINALLY, JOHANN FOUND A TALL TREE WHOSE UPPER LIMBS HUNG OVER THE CASTLE WALL...
THIS WILL DO NICELY!
JOHANN DROPPED NOISELESSLY INTO THE GARDEN BELOW AND CROUCHED IN THE SHADOWS... WATCHING! BEHIND THE HUGE LATTICE WINDOWS, MEN AND WOMEN BEDECKED IN EMBROIDERED LACE AND EXPENSIVE JEWELRY MOVED BEFORE A FOOD-LADEN TABLE... TASTING THIS... SAMPLING THAT...
PIGS! RICH...OVER-FED... POMPOUS PIGS!
FINALLY JOHANN TORE HIMSELF AWAY FROM THE MOUTH-WATERING SCENE AND MADE HIS WAY THROUGH THE GARDEN TO THE SPOT BENEATH THE DUKE'S BEDROOM...
IT IS JUST AS EMILE'S WIFE SAID! THERE IS THE IVY-COVERED TRELLIS THAT I MUST CLIMB TO GET TO THE DUKE'S ROOM!
IT WAS SEVERAL MINUTES LATER THAT JOHANN EMERGED FROM THE DUKE'S WINDOW, HIS POCKETS LADEN WITH JEWELRY! AS HE DESCENDED THE TRELLIS, HE TURNED TO SEE...
SEIZE HIM!
THIEF!
BRING HIM TO THE DUKE!

THE NEXT DAY, A NOTICE WAS PLACED IN THE VILLAGE SQUARE...

WHAT DOES IT SAY, EMILE?

IT SAYS THAT A THIEF HAS BEEN CAUGHT... AND THAT WE ARE ALL ORDERED TO WITNESS HIS PUNISHMENT!

WHO... WHO IS IT?

IT IS JOHANN! HE TRIED TO STEAL SOME OF THE DUKE'S JEWELRY TO PAY THE TAX! I PUT HIM UP TO IT!

THE DUKE'S JEWELRY!

YES! THINK OF WHAT GOLD THOSE USELESS TRINKETS COULD BRING...THE FOOD THAT COULD BE BOUGHT! MILK FOR OUR STARVING CHILDREN... BREAD... CLOTHING!

THE GATHERED VILLAGERS NODDED SADLY IN ASSENT...

HOW LONG MUST THIS GO ON? WHILE WE HERE IN SCHLUSSBERG ROT IN SQUALOR... PAYING EIGHTY PER CENT OF ALL THE FOOD WE GROW TO THE DUKE IN TAXES... HE LIVES AMID PLENTY, BEDECKED IN JEWELRY!

EMILE! FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE! IF ONE OF THE DUKE'S GUARDS HEARS YOU...

ONE RUBY...ONE DIAMOND... ONE PEARL...COULD BUY ENOUGH FOOD TO KEEP A WHOLE FAMILY WELL-FED FOR A YEAR... MAYBE MORE!

EMILE! PLEASE! HUSH!

COME! WE MUST GO TO WITNESS JOHANN'S PUNISHMENT!

A PLATFORM HAD BEEN ERECTED JUST OUTSIDE THE CASTLE GATES! JOHANN STOOD UPON IT, LASHED TO A POST, HIS HANDS TIED BEHIND HIS BACK! SEVERAL GUARDS STOOD NEARBY...

WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY'LL DO TO HIM?

WHIP HIM, PROBABLY! HERE COMES THE DUKE!

THE DUKE OF SCHLUSSTEIN SAUNTERED OUT OF THE CASTLE GATES AND UP ONTO THE PLATFORM! HE GRIMACED DOWN AT THE SALLOW-FACED, UNDER-NOURISHED, GATHERED POPULACE...

AHEM! ER... AH... LAST NIGHT, THIS MAN WAS APPREHENDED LEAVING MY BEDROOM WITH THE JEWELRY WHICH I AM NOW WEARING!

THE DUKE STOPPED TO SNIFF A PINCH OF SNUFF...
LOOK AT THAT DIAMOND! IT'D BUY FOOD FOR TEN YEARS!
THAT PEARL! IT WOULD CLOTHE THE WHOLE VILLAGE!
THEN HE CONTINUED...
THEREFORE...IN ORDER TO DISCOURAGE ANY FURTHER ATTEMPTS AT THEVERY, MY SENTENCE IS THAT THIS MAN'S HANDS...
...BE SEVERED AT THE WRISTS!
THE GUARDS MOVED FAST! THE HORRIFIED PEASANTS WATCHED...STUNNED! JOHANN'S HANDS WERE UNTIED FROM BEHIND HIM AND STRETCHED OUT OVER A CHOPPING BLOCK! ONE OF THE GUARDS RAISED A LARGE AXE...
THE SOUND OF THE AXE FALLING UPON THE BLOCK WAS LIKE AN ELECTRIC SHOCK, JOLTING THE PEASANTS FROM THEIR SILENCE! EMILE DARTED FORWARD...
EMILE! COME BACK!
LOK-K!
THE GUARDS MOVED IN...BUT EMILE WAS TOO QUICK! HE REACHED THE DUKE BEFORE THE GUARDS COULD ACT! THE KNIFE BLADE PRESSED AGAINST THE DUKE'S FAT STOMACH...
CALL OFF YOUR GUARDS, HEINRICH, OR THIS KNIFE RIPS YOU IN TWO...
O-O-DON'T! P-P-PLEASE! GUARDS! L-LEAVE THE P-PLATFORM! P-PLEASE!
EMILE SCREAMED AT HIS FELLOW SERFS AS THE GUARDS MOVED DOWN AMONG THEM...
ARE YOU GOING TO STAND FOR THIS ANY LONGER? WHAT JEWELS ARE WORTH ANY MAN'S HANDS? I ASK YOU! HOW LONG IS THIS OPPRESSION TO GO ON? HOW MANY OF OUR CHILDREN MUST DIE OF STARVATION BEFORE WE ACT?

EMILE TURNED TO THE DUKE...

AND *YOU!* HEINRICH... DUKE OF SCHLUSSTEIN! YOU *LOVE* YOUR MISERABLE JEWELS *SO MUCH?* ALL RIGHT!

EMILE TORE A PEARL FROM THE TERRIFIED DUKE'S CLOTHING...

ALL RIGHT! EAT THEM! HERE! STUFF THEM INTO YOUR FAT FACE AND *SWALLOW* THEM!

EMILE! WAIT!

IGNORING THE CROWD'S SHOUTS OF DISMAY, EMILE MADE THE DUKE SWALLOW DIAMOND AFTER DIAMOND... EMERALD AFTER EMERALD...

HERE! SWALLOW IT! THE *LAST* ONE!

EMILE! THINK OF THE *CHILDREN!*

EMILE TURNED TO THE ANGRY VILLAGERS...

I *AM* THINKING OF THE CHILDREN! THE JEWELRY WILL BUY MUCH *FOOD*... MUCH *CLOTHES* FOR THEM! BUT, IF YOU *WANT THOSE DIAMONDS... THOSE RUBIES...*

EMILE SHOVED THE DUKE OFF THE PLATFORM INTO THE CROWD BELOW...

YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE THEM AWAY FROM HIM!

THE STARVING PEASANTS MOVED IN UPON THE SCREAMING DUKE, *RIPPING... TEARING... PULLING!* EVEN THE DUKE'S GUARDS WANTED A SHARE! FROM TIME TO TIME A TRIUMPHANT SHOUT AROSE FROM THE CROWD AS SOMEONE RECOVERED ONE OF THE MANY PRECIOUS GEMS THE DUKE HAD SWALLOWED...

HEE, HEE! YEP! THE OLD DUKE OF HUMMARE ...YOU KNOW...THE *FIENDE*... GOT *ALL* OF *HEINRICH'S JEWELS* THAT NIGHT! OF COURSE *SOME* OF THEM WERE *PRETTY STICKY-GOOEY!* BUT ON *RUBIES, BLOOD* LOOKS *GOOD!* ANYWAY, FAT HEINRICH WENT TO *PIECES* OVER HIS LOSS...WHICH IS A *MASTERPIECE OF UNDERSTATEMENT!* YEP! HE WAS *BADLY BROKEN UP* ABOUT IT! BUT DON'T *YOU* GET BROKEN UP JUST BECAUSE THIS IS THE WINDUP OF THE *CRYPT-KEEPER'S MAG!* WE'LL *ALL* BE BACK AGAIN IN *THE VAULT OF HORROR...* WITHOUT, I HOPE, THOSE *TWO BLOBS... OUR IDIOT EDITORS!* BYE!

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THE EXECUTION!

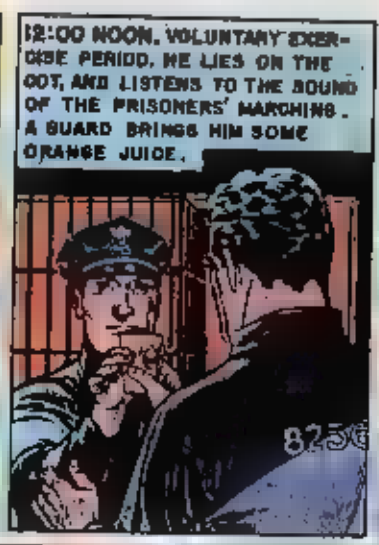
THIS IS THE STORY OF A MAN'S LAST DAY IN PRISON. FOR 219 DAYS INMATE NO. 52668 OCCUPIED CELL 7 IN CELL BLOCK "D", AND THOUGHT OF THE 220TH DAY... WHEN, AS FAR AS SOCIETY WAS CONCERNED, HIS SLATE WOULD BE WIPED CLEAN!

THIS, THEN, IS THE 220TH DAY. NO. 52668 IS SCHEDULED TO DIE IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR TONIGHT...

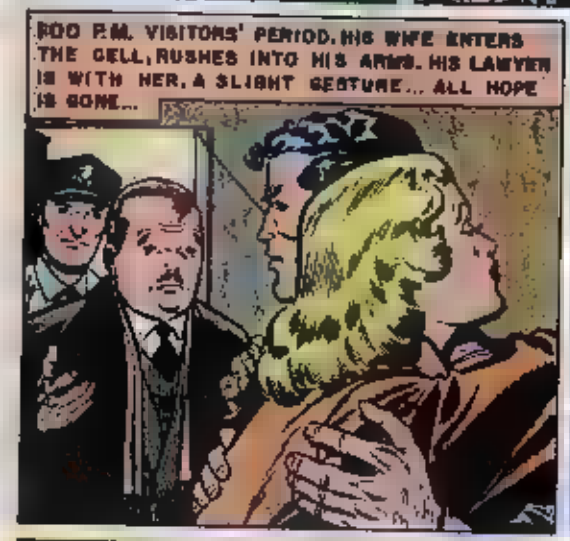
A.M. THE CLANGING OF A GREAT BELL ROUSES NO.82562 FROM A NIGHTMARISH SLEEP, AND THE LAST DAY BEGINS...
CLANG CLANG CLANG
7:00 A.M. HE IS WASHED, DRESSED, AND STANDING IN THE FRONT OF HIS CELL FOR THE DAY'S 'COUNT'...
7:30 A.M. HE RECEIVED BREAKFAST. A 'TRUSTY' SLIPS THE TRAY UNDER THE BARS. CEREAL, EGGS, TOAST, JUICE, TWO GLASSES OF MILK, AND COFFEE. PLENTY OF LIQUIDS...
HE SITS ON THE NARROW COT, THE TRAY BALANCED ON HIS KNEES. AND AS HE SLOWLY EATS, HE THINKS BACK TO THE NIGHT HE HAD BEEN DRIVING IN THAT TERRIBLE SNOW STORM... AND HAD CHANCED UPON ANOTHER DRIVER IN TROUBLE...
...SKID INTO A SNOWBANK?
YES! I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D HELP ME GET BACK ON THE ROAD!
IT TOOK THEM A HALF-HOUR TO GET THE CAR ON THE ROAD... A HALF-HOUR OF DIGGING, PUSHING
KNEELING IN THE SNOW... AND WHEN IT WAS
THEY HAD SMOKED AND TALKED TOGETHER...
...HEADING OUT WEST, YOU SAY?
THAT'S RIGHT. MY JOB WAS MAKING ME A NERVOUS WRECK! DOCTOR SAYS I NEED A GOOD, LONG REST!
SAY! LOOK AT THE TIME! IT'S TEN AFTER EIGHT! I'D BETTER GET GOING!
DIDN'T REALIZE I'D KEPT YOU ALMOST AN HOUR! WELL, THANKS AGAIN, FRIEND. I HOPE I CAN RETURN THE FAVOR SOMEDAY...
A.M. RETURN THE FAVOR? TODAY WOULD BE A PERFECT DAY FOR IT... FOR THAT MAN IS THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN SAVE INMATE NO. 82562 FROM THE ELECTRIC CHAIR...
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK

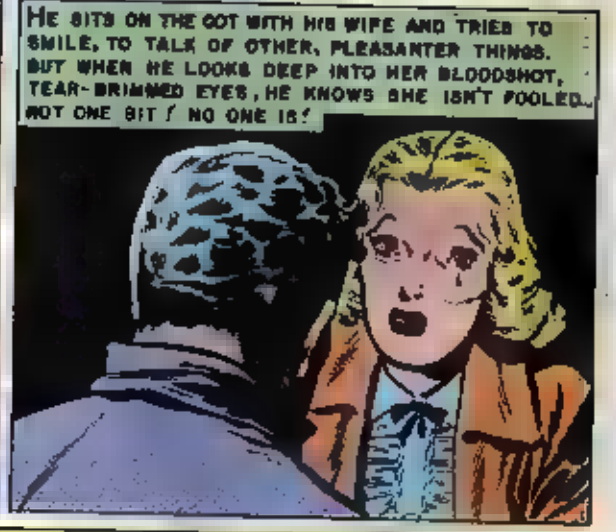
8:15 A.M. HE IS GIVEN A SHAVE... AND CLEAN CLOTHES TO DIE IN! A 'TRUSTY' WIELDS THE RAZOR...
9:00 A.M. EXERCISE PERIOD... ONE HOUR. HE SLOWLY PACES THE NARROW, WIRE-SCREENED CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE CELL...
THE OTHER 'DEATHERS' IN THEIR CELLS WATCH HIM AS HE WALKS BACK AND FORTH. THIS IS *HIS* DAY... AND THE EVER-PRESENT GUARDS ARE WATCHING ALSO...
10:15 A.M. LUNCH... A BIG LUNCH, BUT SMALL APPETITE! EXTRA MILK. EXTRA COFFEE. *PLENTY OF LIQUIDS*... AND PLENTY OF TIME TO RECALL THAT NIGHT IN THE SNOWSTORM WHEN HE WAS STOPPED BY THE POLICE...
WHA... WHAT'S THE MATTER, OFFICERS?
GET OUT WITH YOUR HANDS UP! YOU'RE UNDER ARREST FOR *MURDER!*
A YOUNG WOMAN HAD BEEN KILLED. FROM NEIGHBORS INFORMATION AND STRONG CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE, A WEB OF GUILT WAS WOVEN AROUND HIM FROM WHICH THERE WAS BUT ONE WAY OUT...
... I TELL YOU I WAS HELPING A MAN DIG HIS CAR OUT OF A SNOWBANK AT THE TIME OF THE MURDER!
YEAH? WELL, WHO *IS* THIS MAN? WHAT'S HIS LICENSE NUMBER? WHY HASN'T HE SHOWN UP? WHERE IS HE?
A MILLION QUESTIONS... BUT NO ANSWERS. NAME? LICENSE NUMBER? HE DIDN'T KNOW. A MISSING, UNIDENTIFIED WITNESS WHO COULD SAVE HIS LIFE! THAT MAN WAS *SOMEWHERE*... AND NOWHERE...
FIND HIM! FIND HIM! HE'LL TELL YOU THE *TRUTH!*
WHY DON'T YOU STOP IT? YOU KNOW YOU JUST MADE HIM UP TO GIVE YOURSELF AN ALIBI! BUT YOU'LL GET THE CHAIR ANYWAY!
11:00 A.M. A FRIGHTENING THOUGHT, TO DIE IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR, EVEN TO A HARDENED, RUTHLESS CRIMINAL. HOW MUCH MORE FRIGHTENING THEN, TO MR. BESSE, WHO IS A COMPLETELY *INNOCENT* MAN?

11:30 A.M. HE LIES ON HIS COT AND STARES BLANKLY UP AT THE GREY STONE CEILING... HE SMOKES...


12:00 NOON. VOLUNTARY EXERCISE PERIOD. HE LIES ON THE COT, AND LISTENS TO THE SOUND OF THE PRISONERS' MARCHING. A GUARD BRINGS HIM SOME ORANGE JUICE.

12:30 P.M. HE TRIES TO READ A BOOK, TOSSES IT ASIDE, LIGHTS ANOTHER CIGARETTE...
TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK
TICK TOCK


2:00 P.M. VISITORS' PERIOD. HIS WIFE ENTERS THE CELL, RUSHES INTO HIS ARMS. HIS LAWYER IS WITH HER. A SLIGHT GESTURE... ALL HOPE IS GONE...


HE SITS ON THE COT WITH HIS WIFE AND TRIES TO SMILE, TO TALK OF OTHER, PLEASANTER THINGS. BUT WHEN HE LOOKS DEEP INTO HER BLOODSHOT, TEAR-BRIMMED EYES, HE KNOWS SHE ISN'T FOOLED... NOT ONE BIT! NO ONE IS!

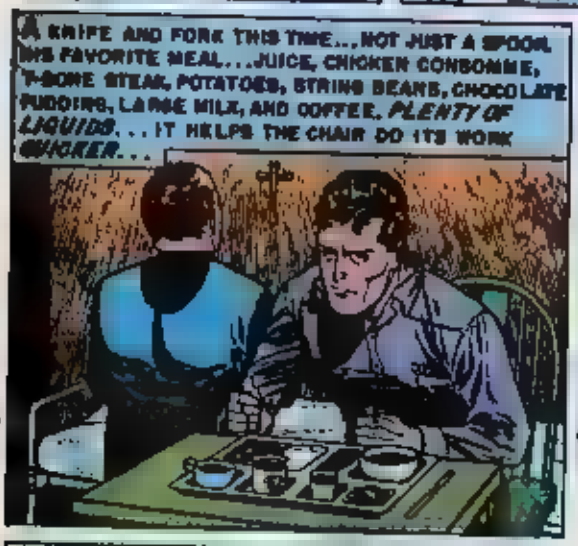
3:00 P.M. VISITORS' PERIOD IS OVER. THE GUARD OPENS THE CELL DOOR, AND NO. 82552 FORCES HIMSELF TO SMILE BRAVELY AS HE SAYS GOOD-BYE. THE LAWYER AND GUARD LEAD HER AWAY. HE'LL NEVER SEE HIS WIFE AGAIN....

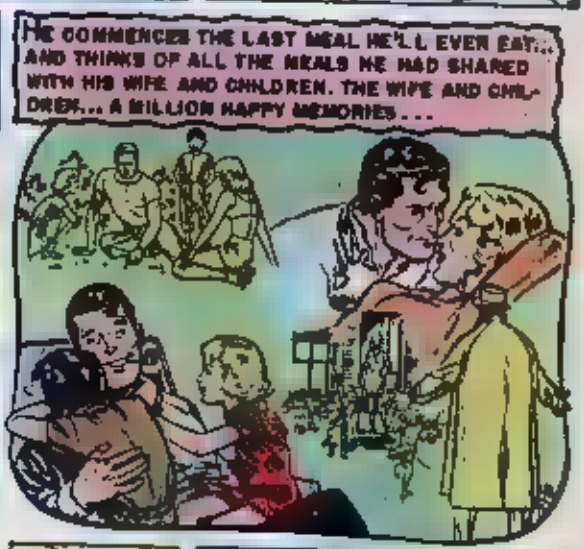
3:30 P.M. HE GIVES A GUARD A SLIP OF PAPER. ON IT IS WRITTEN THE REQUESTS FOR HIS LAST MEAL...
3:45 P.M. HE LIGHTS ANOTHER CIGARETTE AND STARES THROUGH THE BARRED WINDOW. ACROSS THE PRISON YARD HE CAN SEE THE DEATH HOUSE...
HE THINKS... AND LIKE THE HUNDREDS OF TIMES BEFORE, HE THINKS ABOUT WHAT HE SUPPOSES *REALLY* TOOK PLACE THE NIGHT OF THE MURDER...
A JEALOUS SUITOR HAD WAITED... AND WHEN THE GIRL HAD RETURNED FROM A GAY EVENING WITH ANOTHER MAN, AN ARGUMENT FLARED. THEY HAD STRUGGLED IN THE SNOW BEHIND HER HOUSE... AND THE MAN HAD KILLED HER THERE!
NEIGHBORS HAD SEEN THE MURDERER RACE TO HIS CAR AND DRIVE OFF. THEIR DESCRIPTION... HEIGHT, WEIGHT, BUILD, CLOTHING, AUTO... ALL HAD FITTED NO. 52562 PERFECTLY... HE WAS *TRAPPED!*
4:30 P.M. THE PRISON CHAPLAIN ARRIVES, AND NO. 52562 POURS OUT HIS SOUL TO THE ONLY PERSON INSIDE THE WALLS WHO WILL LISTEN, UNDERSTAND... AND BELIEVE! THE TRIAL...
'EQUALITY UNDER LAW'! HOLLOW WORDS NOW. THE TRIAL HAD BEEN A NIGHTMARE!
GUILTY!

5:00 P.M. THE LAST "MILE" BEGINS.

5:03 P.M. ACROSS THE COURTYARD... STRAIGHT TO THE DEATH HOUSE...

5:05 P.M. HE ENTERS THE DEATH CELL. THE LAST MEAL IS WAITING.


A KNIFE AND FORK THIS TIME... NOT JUST A SPOON. HIS FAVORITE MEAL... JUICE, CHICKEN CONSOMME, T-BONE STEAK, POTATOES, STRING BEANS, CHOCOLATE PUDDING, LARGE MILK, AND COFFEE. *PLENTY OF LIQUIDS*... IT HELPS THE CHAIR DO ITS WORK *QUICKER*...

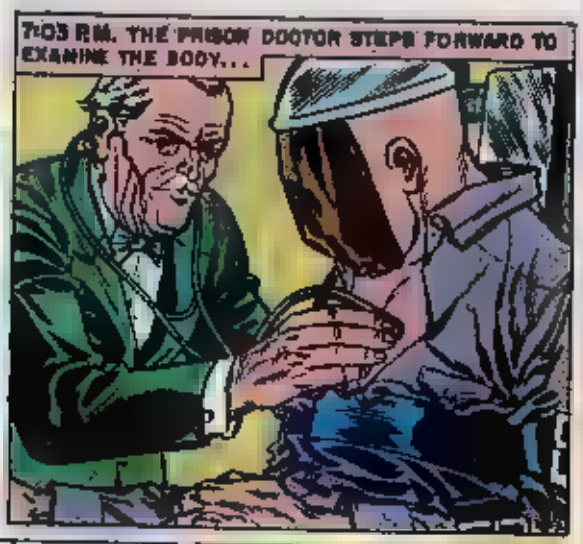

HE COMMENCES THE LAST MEAL HE'LL EVER EAT... AND THINKS OF ALL THE MEALS HE HAD SHARED WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN. THE WIFE AND CHILDREN... A MILLION HAPPY MEMORIES...

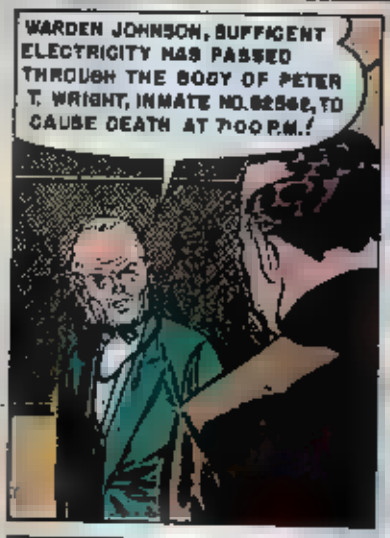
5:40 P.M. A GUARD COMES, TO SHAVE HIS HEAD. THE CHAPLAIN PRAYS...
CLIP! CLIP! CLIP! CLIP! CLIP!

TESTING...
CLIP! CLIP! CLIP! CLIP!

6:00 P.M. THE FINAL HOUR BEGINS...
WHY DO THEY WANT TO KILL ME? I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING... WHERE'S THAT WITNESS? WHY DOESN'T HE COME?
6:15 P.M.
...IN THE MOVIES, THE HERO ALWAYS IS SAVED AT THE LAST MINUTE...
6:30 P.M.
THERE'S STILL TIME! WHERE'S THAT WITNESS? WHERE IS HE?!!
6:45 P.M.
WHY DOESN'T HE HELP ME? WHERE IS HE? WHERE? WHERE?
WHERE?
6:50 P.M. A SINGLE KNOCK ON THE DOOR. IT'S TIME...
6:54 P.M. HE ENTERS THE EXECUTION CHAMBER...
6:58 P.M. HE IS STRAPPED TO THE CHAIR. THE MASK IS PUT OVER HIS FACE...
7:00 P.M.

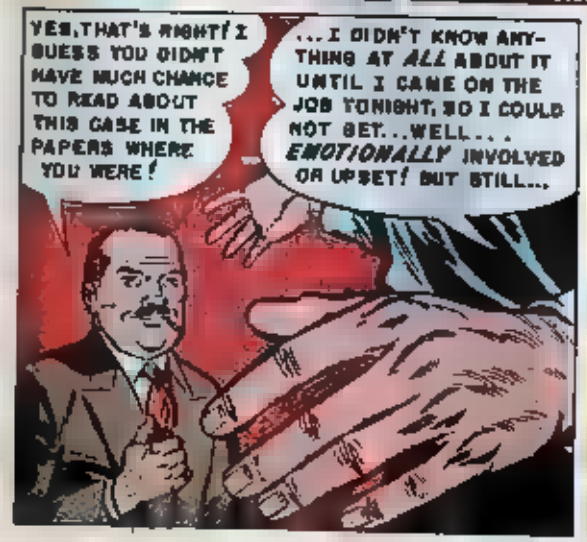
7:01 P.M.


7:03 P.M. THE PRISON DOCTOR STEPS FORWARD TO EXAMINE THE BODY...


WARDEN JOHNSON, SUFFICIENT ELECTRICITY HAS PASSED THROUGH THE BODY OF PETER T. WRIGHT, INMATE NO. 62568, TO CAUSE DEATH AT 7:00 P.M.!

WELL, IT'S OVER! NOW I HAVE TO SEE HOW CHIEF ENGINEER ALVIS STOOD UP UNDER IT!
ALVIS? OH, YES... HE'S THE ONE WHO ALWAYS FEELS SORRY FOR THESE CONDEMNED MEN!

THE WARDEN STEPS THROUGH A DOOR, INTO THE CONTROL ROOM...
WELL, ALVIS, HOW DID IT GO, THIS TIME?
NOT TOO BAD! THIS IS MY FIRST DAY BACK ON THE JOB!


YES, THAT'S RIGHT! I GUESS YOU DIDN'T HAVE MUCH CHANCE TO READ ABOUT THIS CASE IN THE PAPERS WHERE YOU WERE!
...I DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING AT ALL ABOUT IT UNTIL I CAME ON THE JOB TONIGHT, SO I COULD NOT GET...WELL... EMOTIONALLY INVOLVED OR UPSET! BUT STILL...

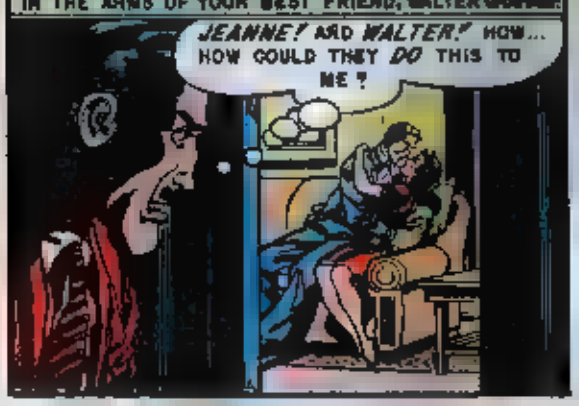
I...I WISH THERE WAS SOMETHING I COULD HAVE DONE TO HELP HIM!

THE FOLLOWING PAIR OF 'E.C. QUICKIES' POSES TWO PROBLEMS! THE FIRST ONE IS...

GIVEN: THE ETERNAL TRIANGLE!
TO FIND: A WAY OUT!
METHOD:

MURDER THE LOVER!

IN THIS FIRST 'E.C. QUICKIE', YOU'RE *KENNETH MARTIN*, A WEALTHY BUSINESSMAN! YOU'RE IN YOUR LATE THIRTIES, HAPPILY MARRIED, AND MADLY IN LOVE WITH YOUR BEAUTIFUL WIFE, JEANNE! BUT ONE DAY YOU COME HOME FROM A BUSINESS TRIP EARLIER THAN EXPECTED, AND YOU FIND JEANNE IN IN THE ARMS OF YOUR BEST FRIEND, WALTER GRAHAM!



AT FIRST YOU'RE HURT... *TERRIBLY* HURT! YOU SLIP OUT AGAIN WITHOUT BEING SEEN AND WALK THE STREETS! AND YOU THINK! YOUR BRAIN IS FILLED WITH A THOUSAND FRIGHTENING THOUGHTS! YOUR HURT TURNS TO *PANIC*... AND THEN TO *HATE!* SO YOU MAKE UP YOUR MIND...

YOU MAKE YOUR PLANS, KENNETH MARTIN! YOU MAKE YOUR PLANS TO KILL YOUR BEST FRIEND, WALTER! AND IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG BEFORE YOU BEGIN PUTTING YOUR PLANS INTO OPERATION...

HELLO, WALT? THIS IS KEN! HOW ARE YOU, BOY? OH, I'VE BEEN OUT OF TOWN ON BUSINESS! SAY! I WAS THINKING, WALT...

THE MOOSE SEASON OPENS THIS WEEK... WHERE WE HAVE OUR SUMMER PLACE! HOW ABOUT GOING UP FOR A FEW DAYS... DO A LITTLE HUNTING?

YOUR PLAN IS SIMPLE, ISN'T IT, KENNETH? *HUNTING ACCIDENTS* ARE VERY *COMMON*, AREN'T THEY? IT'S GOING TO BE SUCH A *TRAGIC ERROR*, ISN'T IT, WHEN YOU SHOOT WALTER... 'MISTAKING' HIM FOR A *MOOSE*?...

HOW MUCH LONGER IS IT, KEN?

ONLY A FEW MORE MILES, WALT!

YOU WATCH YOURSELF VERY CAREFULLY DURING THE LONG TRIP UP TO YOUR LODGE! YOU MUSTN'T LET ON TO WALT THAT YOU HAVE THE SLIGHTEST INKLING OF WHAT'S GOING ON BETWEEN HIS AND JEANNE! AND IT'S HARD TO CONTROL YOURSELF, ISN'T IT, WHEN WALT ASKS...

HOW'S JEANNE THESE DAYS, KEN? I HAVEN'T SEEN HER SINCE BEFORE YOUR TRIP!

OH, SHE'S FINE... JUST *FINE!*

YOU'D LIKE TO SPIT IN HIS EYE, WOULDN'T YOU, KEN? IT MAKES YOUR *BLOOD BOIL* TO HEAR HIM TALK SO CASUALLY ABOUT JEANNE, WHEN ALL THE WHILE HE'S BEEN HAVING AN *AFFAIR* WITH HER... DOESN'T IT? BUT YOU STEEL YOURSELF... KNOWING THAT IN A DAY OR SO YOU'LL HAVE YOUR *REVENGE*...

WELL, HERE WE ARE, WALT! LIKE THE PLACE?

LOVELY, KEN! RIGHT ON A LAKE, TOO! YOU AND JEANNE MUST BE AWFULLY HAPPY HERE DURING THE SUMMER...

YES, YOU AND JEANNE *HAVE* BEEN HAPPY HERE IN PAST SUMMERS, HAVEN'T YOU, KEN? AND YOU'LL *BE* HAPPY *AGAIN*... NEXT SUMMER, TOO! *YOU'RE* GOING TO *SEE* TO *THAT*...

WHAT'S THE LAKE CALLED AGAIN?

IT'S CALLED 'LAKE NAPOLONA,' WALT! IT'S AN OLD *INDIAN* NAME MEANING *LAKE OF ALL WATER!*

OH, YEAH! I REMEMBER NOW! YOU TOLD ME ABOUT IT! ISN'T THERE A SPOT OUT THERE THAT THE INDIANS USED TO BELIEVE HAD *NO BOTTOM*, BUT THAT IS ACTUALLY JUST *VERY DEEP?* YOU MENTIONED THAT SOMEONE *DROWNED* LAST SUMMER, AND THAT THEY *NEVER RECOVERED HIS BODY!*

YES! IT'S *TOO DEEP* TO *DRAG* FOR A BODY OUT THERE! WELL...SHALL WE GO IN?

SURE THING, KEN!

YOU AND WALT UNLOAD THE THINGS FROM THE TRUNK, AND YOU GO INSIDE! WITHIN AN HOUR, YOU'RE BOTH SITTING BEFORE A CHEERY FIRE! ONLY YOU'RE NOT VERY CHEERFUL, ARE YOU, KEN?...

THIS IS *NICE* HERE! YOU'RE A *LUCKY GUY*, KEN!

LUCKY, WALT?

TO BE ABLE TO *AFFORD* THIS *LUXURY*, I MEAN!

I GUESS I AM, WALT! I *GUESS I AM!*

YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY SLEEPING THAT NIGHT, DON'T YOU, KEN? YOU KEEP TOSSING AND TURNING...HEARING WALT'S WORDS...RINGING IN YOUR EARS! "YOU'RE A *LUCKY GUY*, KEN! YOU'RE A *LUCKY GUY! LUCKY GUY! LUCKY..*"

YOU *BET* I'M *LUCKY*, WALT! LUCKY TO HAVE *FOUND OUT* ABOUT YOU AND JEANNE *IN TIME!*

THE NEXT MORNING YOU'RE UP AT THE CRACK OF DAWN...ANXIOUS TO GET STARTED! AT BREAKFAST...

I'VE *NEVER HUNTED MOOSE BEFORE*, KEN! I UNDERSTAND THEY CAN BE *PARTICULARLY VICIOUS!*

A WOUNDED BULL CAN BE *VERY DANGEROUS*, WALT! WELL! WHAT SAY WE *TRY OUR LUCK?*

AND NOW YOU'RE OUT THERE IN THE DESERTED WOODS WITH HIM, AREN'T YOU, KEN? HIS BRIGHT RED MACKINAW IS GOING TO BE A *PERFECT TARGET*, ISN'T IT? YOU WALK ALONG IN SILENCE...WAITING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY...

HOLD UP A MINUTE, WALT! I JUST THOUGHT OF SOMETHING!

WHAT?

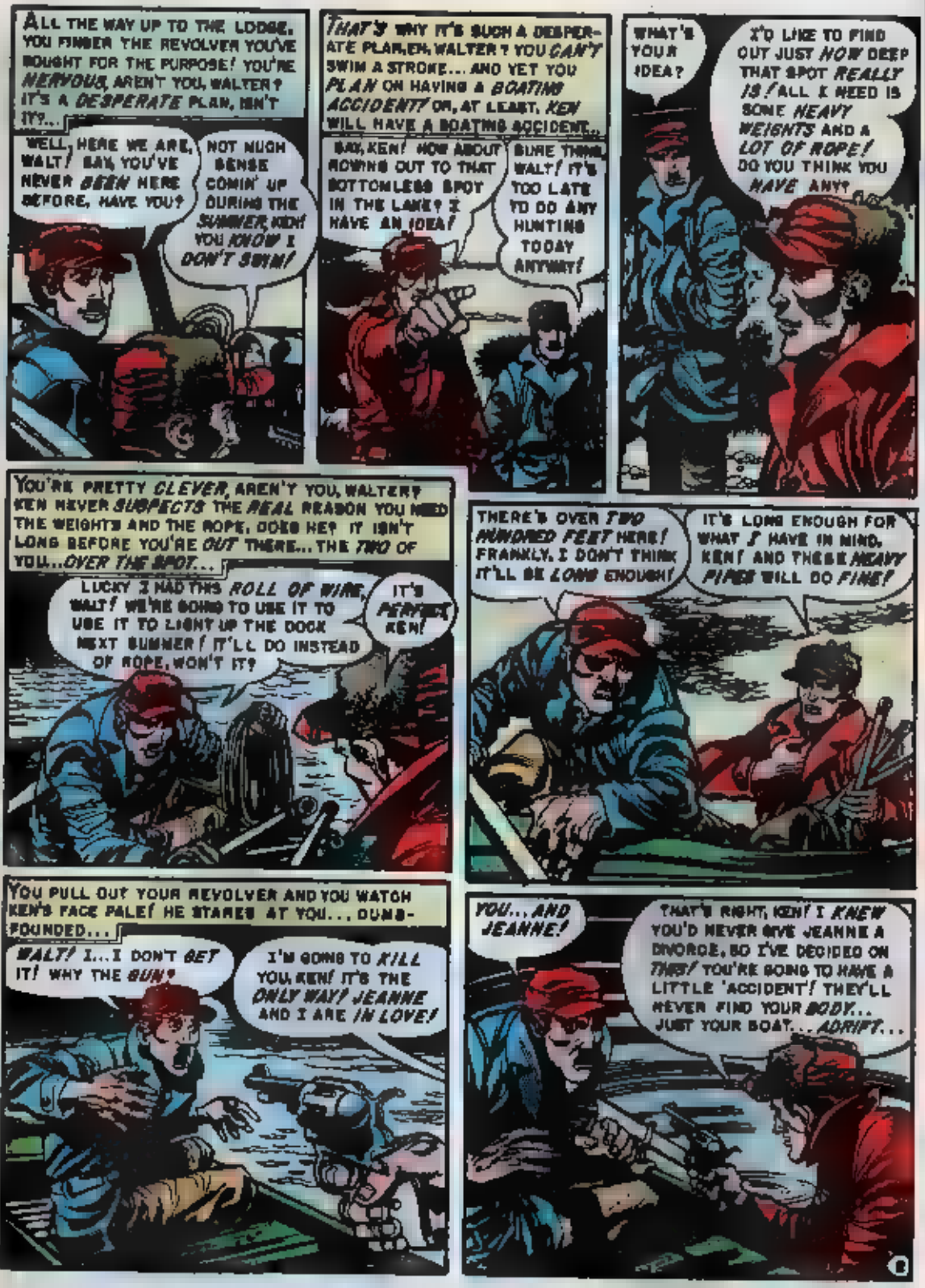
WE'D STAND A BETTER CHANCE OF SCARING UP A MOOSE IF WE *SEPARATE!* HOW ABOUT YOU BEARING LEFT...AND I'LL GO RIGHT! THEN WE'LL CIRCLE AROUND AND MEET FURTHER ON...

GOOD IDEA, KEN! OKAY! SEE YOU LATER!

WALT MARCHES OFF INTO THE WOODS TO THE LEFT! YOU WATCH HIM GO, HIS RED MACKINAW FLASHING THROUGH THE BRUSH! YOU BRING YOUR RIFLE TO YOUR SHOULDER... AIM DOWN THE LONG BARREL...
YOU WAIT UNTIL HE HITS AN OPEN SPOT! THEN... AS THE BLOTCH OF BRIGHT RED CROSSES YOUR GUN-SIGHTS, YOU SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER...
BLANG!
THE REPORT ECHOES THROUGH THE SILENT FOREST! A FRIGHTENED CROW RISES FROM A TREE-TOP AND FLIES OFF SCREAMING! WALT TURNS, WIDE-EYED! YOU'VE MISSED...
KEN! FOR GOD'S SAKE...
YOU TAKE BETTER AIM, THIS TIME! WALT SHOUTS AN OBJECTION AS YOU PULL THE TRIGGER AND HIS CRY IS CUT SHORT BY THE BLAST...
TWANG!
KEN! I...CHOKE!
HE DROPS TO THE GROUND! YOU FLING YOUR RIFLE AWAY IN REVULSION OVER YOUR NEFARIOUS DEED AND EDGE TOWARD HIM! WALT LIES FACE DOWN IN AN EVER-WIDENING POOL OF BLOOD...
I...I'M RID OF YOU... YOU DIRTY...
A CRASHING BEHIND YOU MAKES YOU TURN! YOUR BLOOD FREEZES IN YOUR VEINS WHEN YOU SEE IT COMING AT YOU... A RED-EYED WOUNDED BULL MOOSE...
GOOD LORD!
AND YOU'RE ROOTED TO THE SPOT AS THE BEAST CHARGES AT YOU...ITS HEAD LOWERED... ITS LETHAL ANTLERS POINTED...
YAAAAAAAAAA!
AS DEATH COMES... RELIEVING THE SUFFERING OF YOUR GORED AND BROKEN BODY... YOU KNOW THAT, ALTHOUGH YOUR FIRST SHOT MISSED WALT, YOUR AIM WAS TRUE! AND IT WAS YOUR FIRST MOOSE... TOO!
THE END

THE SECOND PROBLEM ■ THIS PAIR OF E.C. QUICKIES IS...
GIVEN: THE SAME TRIANGLE!
TO FIND: ANOTHER WAY OUT!
METHOD:

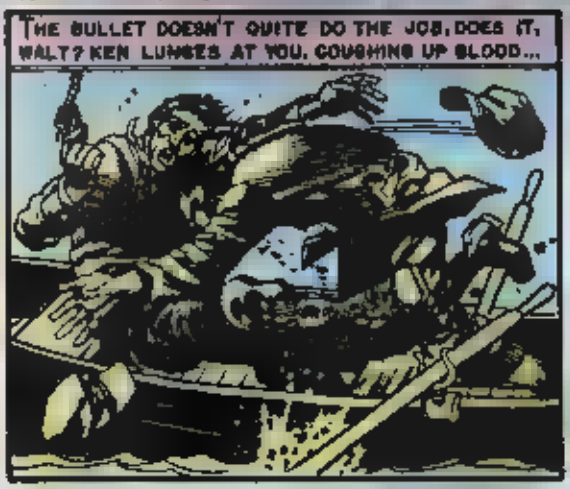
MURDER THE HUSBAND!

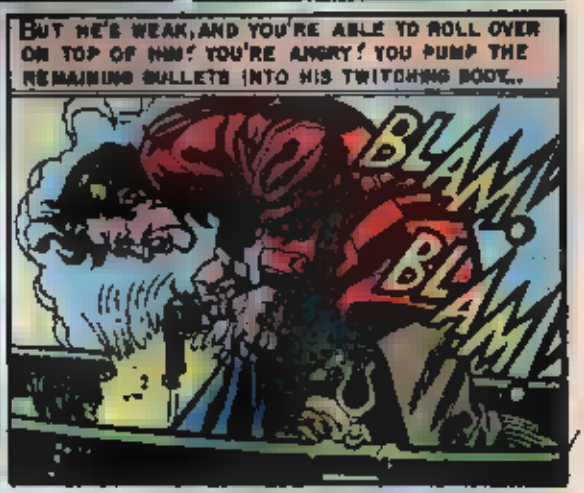

ALL THE WAY UP TO THE LODGE, YOU FINGER THE REVOLVER YOU'VE BOUGHT FOR THE PURPOSE! YOU'RE NERVOUS, AREN'T YOU, WALTER? IT'S A DESPERATE PLAN, ISN'T IT?...
WELL, HERE WE ARE, WALT! SAY, YOU'VE NEVER BEEN HERE BEFORE, HAVE YOU?
NOT MUCH SENSE COMIN' UP DURING THE SUMMER, KEN! YOU KNOW I DON'T SWIM!
THAT'S WHY IT'S SUCH A DESPERATE PLAN, EH, WALTER? YOU CAN'T SWIM A STROKE... AND YET YOU PLAN ON HAVING A BOATING ACCIDENT! OR, AT LEAST, KEN WILL HAVE A BOATING ACCIDENT...
SAY, KEN! HOW ABOUT ROWING OUT TO THAT BOTTOMLESS SPOT IN THE LAKE? I HAVE AN IDEA!
SURE THING, WALT! IT'S TOO LATE TO DO ANY HUNTING TODAY ANYWAY!
WHAT'S YOUR IDEA?
I'D LIKE TO FIND OUT JUST NOW DEEP THAT SPOT REALLY IS! ALL I NEED IS SOME HEAVY WEIGHTS AND A LOT OF ROPE! DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE ANY?
YOU'RE PRETTY CLEVER, AREN'T YOU, WALTER? KEN NEVER SUSPECTS THE REAL REASON YOU NEED THE WEIGHTS AND THE ROPE, DOES HE? IT ISN'T LONG BEFORE YOU'RE OUT THERE... THE TWO OF YOU...OVER THE SPOT...
LUCKY I HAD THIS ROLL OF WIRE, WALT! WE'RE GOING TO USE IT TO USE IT TO LIGHT UP THE DOCK NEXT SUMMER! IT'LL DO INSTEAD OF ROPE, WON'T IT?
IT'S PERFECT, KEN!
THERE'S OVER TWO HUNDRED FEET HERE! FRANKLY, I DON'T THINK IT'LL BE LONG ENOUGH!
IT'S LONG ENOUGH FOR WHAT I HAVE IN MIND, KEN! AND THESE HEAVY PIPES WILL DO FINE!
YOU PULL OUT YOUR REVOLVER AND YOU WATCH KEN'S FACE PALE! HE STARES AT YOU... DUMBFOUNDED...
WALT! I...I DON'T GET IT! WHY THE GUN?
I'M GOING TO KILL YOU, KEN! IT'S THE ONLY WAY! JEANNE AND I ARE IN LOVE!
YOU... AND JEANNE!
THAT'S RIGHT, KEN! I KNEW YOU'D NEVER GIVE JEANNE A DIVORCE, SO I'VE DECIDED ON THIS! YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A LITTLE 'ACCIDENT'! THEY'LL NEVER FIND YOUR BODY... JUST YOUR BOAT... ADRIFT...

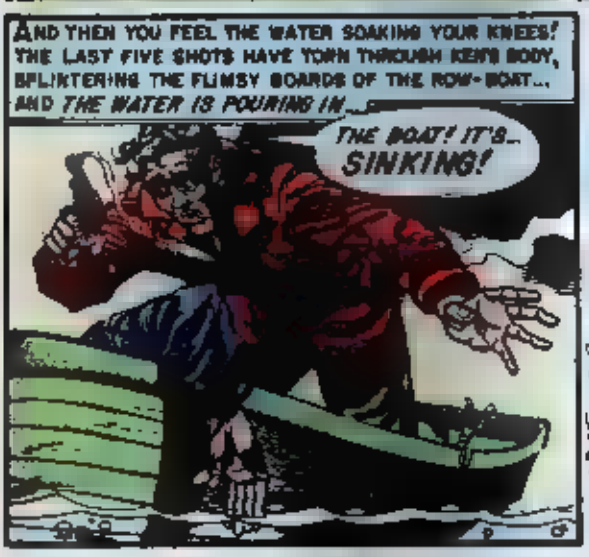
AND THEY'LL KNOW I DIDN'T GO OUT ON THE LAKE WITH YOU...BECAUSE I'M AFRAID OF BOATS! I CAN'T SWIM!
YOU'RE CRAZY, WALT! THIS IS INSANE!

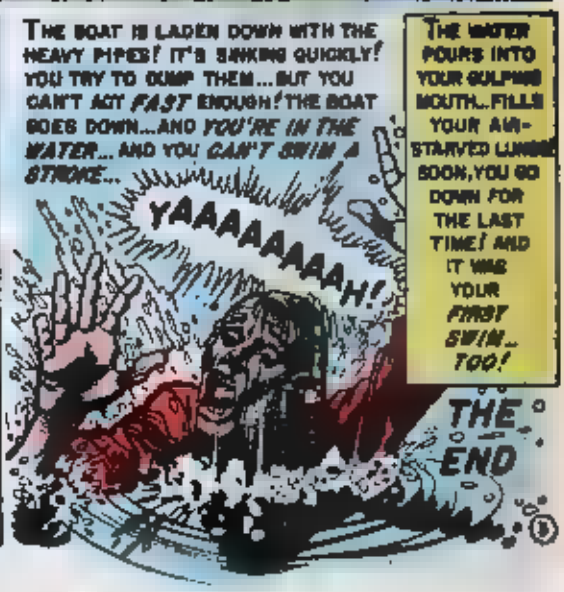
AFTER I SHOOT YOU, I'M GOING TO TIE THESE HEAVY PIPES TO YOUR BODY AND THROW YOU OVERBOARD... THEN ROW BACK AND SET THE BOAT ADRIFT!
WAIT, WALT! PLEASE! I...

BUT YOU DON'T WAIT, DO YOU, WALTER? YOU SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER AND WATCH KEN'S EXPRESSION FREEZE AS THE SLUG RIPS INTO HIM...


THE BULLET DOESN'T QUITE DO THE JOB, DOES IT, WALT? KEN LUNGES AT YOU, COUGHING UP BLOOD...


BUT HE'S WEAK, AND YOU'RE ABLE TO ROLL OVER ON TOP OF HIM! YOU'RE ANGRY! YOU PUMP THE REMAINING BULLETS INTO HIS TWITCHING BODY...
BLAM!
BLAM!


AND THEN YOU FEEL THE WATER SOAKING YOUR KNEES! THE LAST FIVE SHOTS HAVE TORN THROUGH KEN'S BODY, SHRIKTERING THE FLIMSY BOARDS OF THE ROW-BOAT... AND THE WATER IS POURING IN...
THE BOAT! IT'S... SINKING!


THE BOAT IS LADEN DOWN WITH THE HEAVY PIPES! IT'S SINKING QUICKLY! YOU TRY TO DUMP THEM... BUT YOU CAN'T ACT FAST ENOUGH! THE BOAT GOES DOWN... AND YOU'RE IN THE WATER... AND YOU CAN'T SWIM A STROKE...
YAAAAAAAAH!
THE WATER POURS INTO YOUR GULPING MOUTH... FILLS YOUR AIR-STARVED LUNGS SOON, YOU GO DOWN FOR THE LAST TIME! AND IT WAS YOUR FIRST SWIM... TOO!
THE END

TRAP!

Hackett brought the gunbutt down with shattering force: he felt the man's skull splinter under the impact. For a second there was a spasmodic thrashing of arms and legs, then all was quiet. From the man's pockets Hackett took a monogrammed handkerchief, a keycase and a fistful of coins and bills. All but the money he hurled to the ground. *They're not tracing ME through this guy's junk*, Hackett thought. *I'm not slipping into THAT kind of a trap!*

5 minutes later . . . 7 blocks from the scene of the murder . . . Hackett stepped into a side-street bar. He seated himself in a booth at the rear of the smoky room, out of sight of the front door. *A ten-spot . . . a fiver . . . two ones . . . a quarter . . . a dime*, he noted with satisfaction, staring at the loot spread out before him. To the waiter who hovered nearby, he said: "Make mine a beer!" Then, ■ the man waddled toward the bar, Hackett slipped all but the dime back into his pocket. Spinning the ten-cent piece on the tabletop, he suddenly gasped in dismay and his fist closed over the coin convulsively. Quickly he dropped it back in his pocket; when the waiter arrived with the beer, Hackett fumbled out the quarter and pushed it nervously across the table. Even before the waiter had reached the cash register for his change, Hackett had gulped down the beer and hurried through the door. *That DIME*, he thought after he had turned the corner and made sure that no one had followed him, *it might have TRAPPED me! It's got a hole punched through it . . . might've been the guy's good-luck piece! Someone may identify that stiff I knocked off tonight, and tell the cops about the coin! And that waiter might've remembered that I gave him a dime with a hole drilled through it! It might've TRAPPED me!*

Without a moment's hesitation, Hackett hurled the coin far away from him. Only *then* did he permit himself a smile. He had narrowly avoided the trap which Fate had set for him, but the danger was past! No one could trace that perforated coin ■ him *now!*

At 10:35 that night, ■ he was wobbling out of the fourth bar he had visited that evening, Hackett chanced to look at the coins in his palm. One of them . . . a shiny new dime . . . had a hole punched precisely through its center! Hackett gasped and lunged into the street, away from the building. *I-I threw it away already*, he muttered in terror . . . *i-it's trying to point the finger at me!* And then, for the second time within 4 hours, Hackett hurled a silver dime into the night.

32 minutes (and 2 bars) later, Hackett gasped again. In his shaking hand were TWO shiny new dimes . . . each with a hole punched through the metal! He dropped the coins as if they were charged with electricity, and lunged drunkenly down the street as fast ■ he could move. *I-It's a TRAP*, he moaned . . . *i-it CAN'T be happening! Those coins . . . t-they're trying to bound me! But I won't let 'em . . .*

At 1 minute after midnight, his face haggard and eyes bloodshot, Hackett looked down at the coin he had received ■ change from the seventh bar he had visited that fateful evening. Through the center of the dime was a neatly drilled hole!

"N-No . . . NO!" he screamed aloud, lunging blindly into the gutter and thrusting the coins from him. "T-That cursed dime's trying ■ drive me crazy . . . b-but I won't fall into its TRAP . . . !"

The screech of brakes blanketed Hackett before he knew what was happening: the car which had crashed into him jammed to a stop immediately. Even as the shaking driver bent over Hackett's body and felt for the heartbeat which wasn't there, the car radio could be heard:

". . . and the Government requests that all such coins be returned to banks and post-offices at once. An investigation is under way at the moment ■ determine the exact reason why each new dime issued in this area in the past two days, has a hole punched through its center. It is estimated that 50,000 of these dimes have accidentally been distributed . . ."

SNOOZE TO ME!

I'D SUSPECTED IT FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, BUT I WOULDN'T ADMIT IT TO MYSELF! A WOMAN DOESN'T LIKE TO FIND OUT THOSE THINGS... ESPECIALLY WHEN HER YEARS ARE BEGINNING TO SHOW! BUT THAT NIGHT WHEN I WAITED UP FOR HERBERT, THE WHOLE THING CAME TO A HEAD! IT WAS ABOUT THREE A.M. WHEN THE BEDROOM DOOR FINALLY OPENED...

HUH? WHY, *NANCY!* YOU'RE *STILL UP!*

RATHER *LATE* FOR A *BUSINESS CONFERENCE*, ISN'T IT, HERB?

HERBERT SAT DOWN ON THE BED BESIDE ME AND SMILED...

I'M *SORRY*, DEAR! A COUPLE OF THE BOYS SUGGESTED A FEW HANDS OF *POKER*, AND *BEFORE I KNEW IT*...

YOU'RE *LYING* TO ME, HERBERT! I WASN'T BORN *YESTERDAY!* BESIDES... YOUR *COLLAR* IS *SMEARED WITH LIPSTICK!*

AS I SAID, A WIFE DOESN'T LIKE TO FIND THAT HER HUSBAND IS CARRYING ON WITH ANOTHER WOMAN! FOR SEVERAL MONTHS I'D BEEN CLOSING MY EYES TO THOSE TELL-TALE INDICATIONS THAT I'D LOST MY APPEAL FOR MY HUSBAND...

LIP... LIPSTICK! W-WHERE!

THERE! ON YOUR COLLAR! WHO IS SHE, HERB?

OH, THAT! THAT'S NOTHING, NANCY! CRESTWOOD'S WIFE VISITED THE OFFICE TODAY! I...I BUMPED INTO HER COMING OUT OF THE ELEVATOR! I GUESS SHE MUST HAVE...

I SAID DON'T LIE TO ME, HERBERT! I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU AND THAT... THAT WOMAN!

YOU'RE CRAZY, NANCY! I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!

I CALLED THE OFFICE THIS AFTERNOON, HERB! YOUR MR. WRESTWOOD DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT A BUSINESS CONFERENCE!

GOOD LORD, NANCY! I HOPE YOU DIDN'T TELL HIM ABOUT IT! HE WASN'T INVITED! THIS WAS STRICTLY SECRET! HIGGINS AND I ARE COOKING UP A DEAL...

WHERE WAS THE CONFERENCE, HERB? AT HIGGINS'S HOUSE ...OR AT THE OFFICE...

WHY...ER... NEITHER! WE MET AT MY CLUB! WE DIDN'T WANT ANYONE TO...

IT'S NO GOOD, HERB! I CALLED YOUR CLUB! I CALLED THE OFFICE, TOO! I CALLED HIGGIN'S AT HIS HOME! HE WAS HOME ALL EVENING! WHO IS SHE, HERB?

HERB KNEW HE WAS CAUGHT! HE GOT VERY RED... STARTED TO RAVE...

ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! IT'S TRUE! EVERY WORD OF IT! THERE IS ANOTHER WOMAN! AND I'M CRAZY ABOUT HER!

I'LL NEVER GIVE YOU UP, HERB! YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY PLENTY TO GET RID OF ME!

I GUESS WE STARTED TO SHOUT AND SCREAM AT EACH OTHER! WE MADE THREATS, POURED OUT INSULTS! SUDDENLY, THE BEDROOM DOOR SWUNG OPEN AND MY MAID EDITH PEERED IN...

I...I THOUGHT YOU CALLED ME, MADAM!

SOB...SOB! N-NO, EDITH! I...I DIDN'T CALL... SOB... SOB...

I'M GETTING OUT, NANCY!

I SHOT A FURTIVE GLANCE AT EDITH! SHE BLUSHED! SHE WAS EMBARRASSED BY THE TICKLISH SITUATION SHE'D WALKED IN ON...

I...I'M SORRY I DISTURBED YOU, MADAM! I'LL...

NO! WAIT! DON'T GO, EDITH!

YES! STAY, EDITH! KEEP MRS. CHASE COMPANY! I'LL GO!

HERB SLAMMED SOME THINGS INTO A BAG AND HEADED TOWARDS THE DOOR...

IF ANYONE WANTS ME, I'LL BE AT MY CLUB! AS FOR YOU, MRS. CHASE, YOU CAN DEAL WITH ME THROUGH MY LAWYER! I'M STARTING DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS!

NO! HERB! WAIT! DON'T LEAVE! I FORGIVE YOU! I FOR...

THE BEDROOM DOOR BANGED SHUT CUTTING OFF MY PLEA! THERE WAS A MOMENT OF SILENCE... POOR EDITH STOOD WITH HER HEAD BOWED... SHIFTING UNCOMFORTABLY FROM ONE FOOT TO THE OTHER...

HERB! SOB! HERB! HERB!

SLAM!

FINALLY I COULD CONTROL MYSELF NO LONGER! I FLUNG MYSELF UPON THE BED AND BEGAN TO CRY HYSTERICALLY...

HE...HE'S LEFT ME... OH, EDITH... SOB... SOB... SOB...

EDITH CAME AND SAT DOWN BESIDE ME! SHE BEGAN TO COMFORT ME! EDITH HAD BEEN MY MAID FOR TWO YEARS! SHE'D BEEN BOTH SERVANT AND COMPANION TO ME DURING THAT TIME...

DON'T CRY, MA'AM! HE'LL COME BACK! IT'S JUST A LOVER'S QUARREL!

SOB...SOB... THERE'S ANOTHER WOMAN, EDITH!

EDITH SEEMED SHOCKED! FOR A MOMENT SHE DREW BACK...

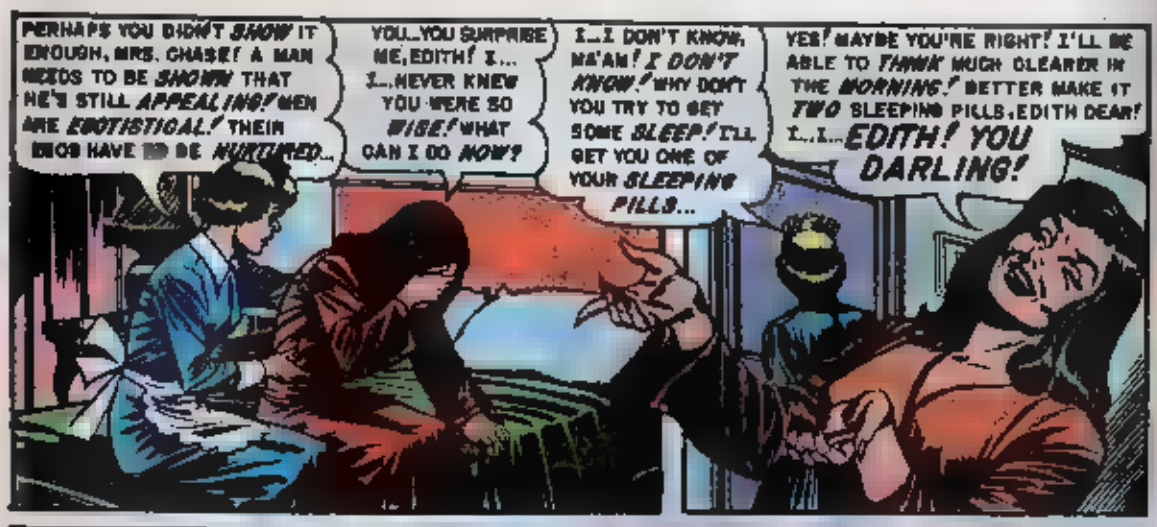
YOU DIDN'T KNOW, DID YOU, DEAR? YOU THOUGHT EVERYTHING WAS PEACHES AND CREAM BETWEEN HERB AND ME! YOU DIDN'T THINK A THING LIKE THIS COULD HAPPEN, DID YOU?

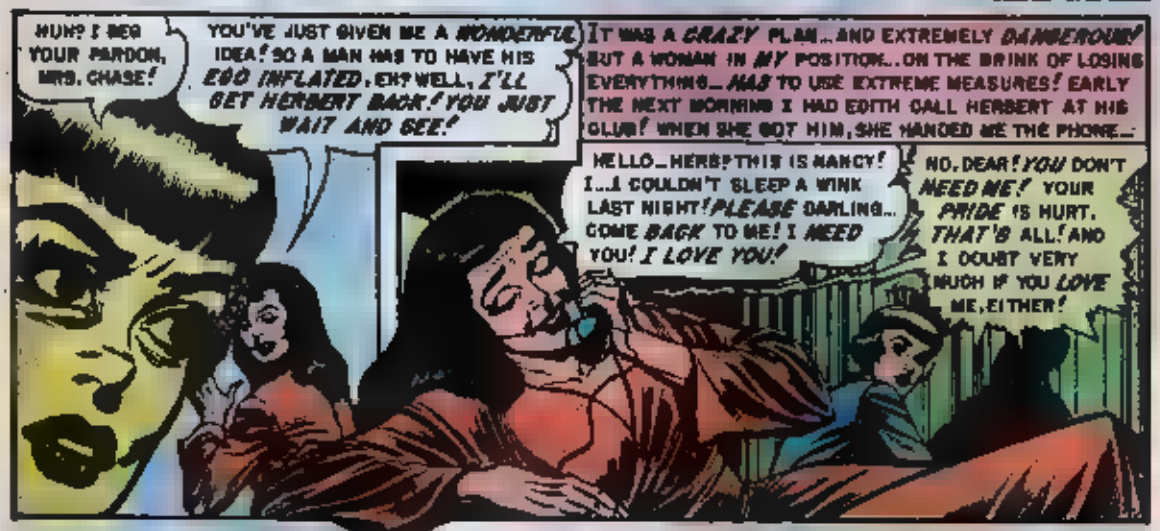
I...I'M SORRY, MRS. CHASE! I WASN'T AWARE...

EDITH BEGAN TO COMFORT ME ONCE MORE! SHE BEGAN TO TALK, TOO! AND THE GIRL MADE SENSE!

THESE THINGS HAPPEN, MRS. CHASE! WHEN A MAN NEEDS AFFECTION AND HIS WIFE DOESN'T GIVE IT TO HIM, HE LOOKS ELSEWHERE!

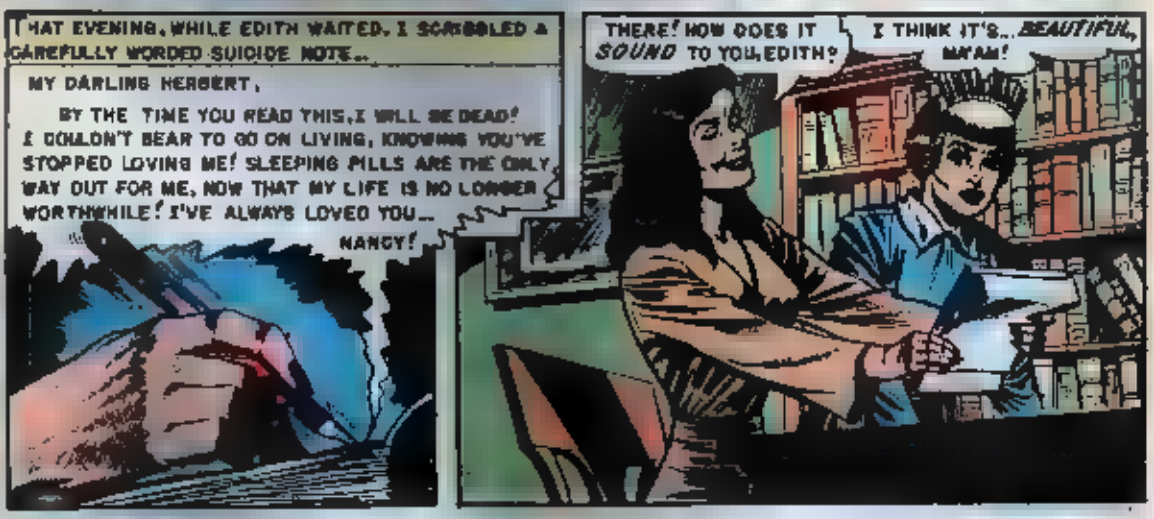
BUT...SOB... HOW ANGRY I LOVE HIM, EDITH!


PERHAPS YOU DIDN'T SHOW IT ENOUGH, MRS. CHASE! A MAN NEEDS TO BE SHOWN THAT HE'S STILL APPEALING! MEN ARE EGOTISTICAL! THEIR EGOS HAVE TO BE NURTURED...
YOU...YOU SURPRISE ME, EDITH! I... I...NEVER KNEW YOU WERE SO WISE! WHAT CAN I DO NOW?
I...I DON'T KNOW, MA'AM! I DON'T KNOW! WHY DON'T YOU TRY TO GET SOME SLEEP! I'LL GET YOU ONE OF YOUR SLEEPING PILLS...
YES! MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT! I'LL BE ABLE TO THINK MUCH CLEARER IN THE MORNING! BETTER MAKE IT TWO SLEEPING PILLS, EDITH DEAR! I...I...EDITH! YOU DARLING!


HUH? I BEG YOUR PARDON, MRS. CHASE!
YOU'VE JUST GIVEN ME A WONDERFUL IDEA! SO A MAN HAS TO HAVE HIS EGO INFLATED, EH? WELL, I'LL GET HERBERT BACK! YOU JUST WAIT AND SEE!
IT WAS A CRAZY PLAN...AND EXTREMELY DANGEROUS! BUT A WOMAN IN MY POSITION...ON THE BRINK OF LOSING EVERYTHING...HAS TO USE EXTREME MEASURES! EARLY THE NEXT MORNING I HAD EDITH CALL HERBERT AT HIS CLUB! WHEN SHE GOT HIM, SHE HANDED ME THE PHONE...
HELLO...HERB? THIS IS NANCY! I...I COULDN'T SLEEP A WINK LAST NIGHT! PLEASE DARLING... COME BACK TO ME! I NEED YOU! I LOVE YOU!
NO, DEAR! YOU DON'T NEED ME! YOUR PRIDE IS HURT, THAT'S ALL! AND I DOUBT VERY MUCH IF YOU LOVE ME, EITHER!

I PUT IT ON...THE WHOLE ACT! I SOBBED LIKE A BABY, AND THEN I SAID IT...
I...I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU, HERB! I'LL...I'LL KILL MYSELF IF YOU DON'T COME BACK! COMMIT SUICIDE!
AW, CUT IT OUT NANCY! YOU'RE JUST BEING DRAMATIC!
HE HUNG UP! EDITH STARED AT ME...
YOU...YOU WOULDN'T DO THAT...WOULD YOU, MA'AM? KILL... YOURSELF?
NOT REALLY, EDITH! BUT I HAVE A PLAN!
I THINK HERB WOULD BE CONVINCED IF I DID ATTEMPT SUICIDE! I'LL LEAVE A NOTE AND EVERYTHING! I'LL TAKE SLEEPING PILLS! THE WHOLE BOTTLE...
NO! I WON'T LET YOU, MRS. CHASE!

DON'T WORRY, EDITH! JUST AS SOON AS I TAKE THEM, YOU'LL CALL AN AMBULANCE! THEY'LL GET THE THINGS PUMPED OUT OF ME AND HERBERT WILL BE CONVINCED!
I'M AFRAID, MRS. CHASE!
COME, COME, DEAR! DON'T BE! IT'S BOUND TO WORK! THERE'S NO DANGER! IT TAKES A LONG WHILE FOR SLEEPING PILLS TO KILL YOU!
AND THEY REALLY CAN PUMP THEM OUT BEFORE THEY TAKE EFFECT!
THAT'S RIGHT! THINK OF WHAT HERBERT WILL SAY WHEN HE FINDS OUT I TRIED TO KILL MYSELF BECAUSE OF HIM! HE'LL COME RUNNING BACK!
I'M... I'M SURE OF IT, MA'AM!


THAT EVENING, WHILE EDITH WAITED, I SCRIBBLED A CAREFULLY WORDED SUICIDE NOTE...
MY DARLING HERBERT,
BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS, I WILL BE DEAD! I COULDN'T BEAR TO GO ON LIVING, KNOWING YOU'VE STOPPED LOVING ME! SLEEPING PILLS ARE THE ONLY WAY OUT FOR ME, NOW THAT MY LIFE IS NO LONGER WORTHWHILE! I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU...
NANCY!
THERE! HOW DOES IT SOUND TO YOU, EDITH?
I THINK IT'S... BEAUTIFUL, MA'AM!

I PROPPED THE NOTE UP NEXT TO MY BED AND OPENED THE BOTTLE OF SLEEPING PILLS...
NOW, REMEMBER, EDITH, DEAR! FIRST CALL THE AMBULANCE! THEN CALL MR. CHASE AND TELL HIM! AND ACT IT UP, WILL YOU, DEAR! SOB A BIT! PLAY SHOCKED!
I'LL DO MY BEST, MA'AM!

I STARTED SWALLOWING THE PILLS! I THINK I COUNTED TWENTY-EIGHT! EDITH WATCHED ME, GASPING WITH EACH ONE...
PLEASE, MA'AM! THAT'S ENOUGH!
ONLY TWO TO GO, HONEY! YOU... YOU CAN GO CALL THE AMBULANCE, NOW!

EDITH WENT OUT OF THE ROOM AND I LAY BACK ON MY BED! I BEGAN TO FEEL A LITTLE NUMB...

EDITH! DID YOU CALL?

YES, MA'AM!

EDITH CAME BACK INTO THE ROOM AND SAT DOWN ON THE BED NEXT TO ME! SHE LOOKED A LITTLE HAZY! THE PILLS WERE BEGINNING TO HAVE THEIR EFFECT...

NOW...GO...CALL... MR. CHASE, EDITH! TELL... HIM... YOU JUST... FOUND ME...

I CALLED HIM ALREADY, MA'AM!

I BEGAN TO FEEL AS IF I WERE PARALYZED! EVERY MUSCLE IN MY BODY BEGAN TO ACHE! THE ROOM BEGAN TO SPIN...

THE HOSPITAL... EDITH! NOW... GASP... LONG... DID... THEY... SAY... THEY'D... GASP... TAKE?

I DIDN'T CALL THE HOSPITAL, MRS. CHASE! I'M NOT GOING TO...

SOMEONE LOOMED UP IN BACK OF EDITH! IT WAS HERBERT! HE GRINNED DOWN AT ME...

HERBERT... GASP! TO-CALL... AN AMBULANCE! I... I'VE JUST... SWALLOWED... SLEEPING... PILLS... TWENTY-EIGHT... OF... THEM!

I KNOW, NANCY! YOU'VE BEEN VERY COOPERATIVE!

I TOLD YOU IT WOULD WORK, HERB, DARLING!

HERB... GASP... DARLING!

YOU WANTED TO KNOW WHO THE OTHER WOMAN WAS, NANCY? WELL... YOU'RE LOOKING AT HER!

EDITH! GASP! YOU... AND... HERB...

THAT'S RIGHT, MRS. CHASE! AND THANKS FOR THE SUICIDE NOTE! IT'S OUR PERFECT ALIBI!

EVERYTHING IS GOING BLACK NOW! IN A FEW MORE MINUTES, I'LL BE GONE TO SLEEP FOR GOOD! EDITH AND HERB ARE STANDING, ARM IN ARM, WATCHING ME! CLEVER EDITH! I'D UNDERESTIMATED HER...

THE END

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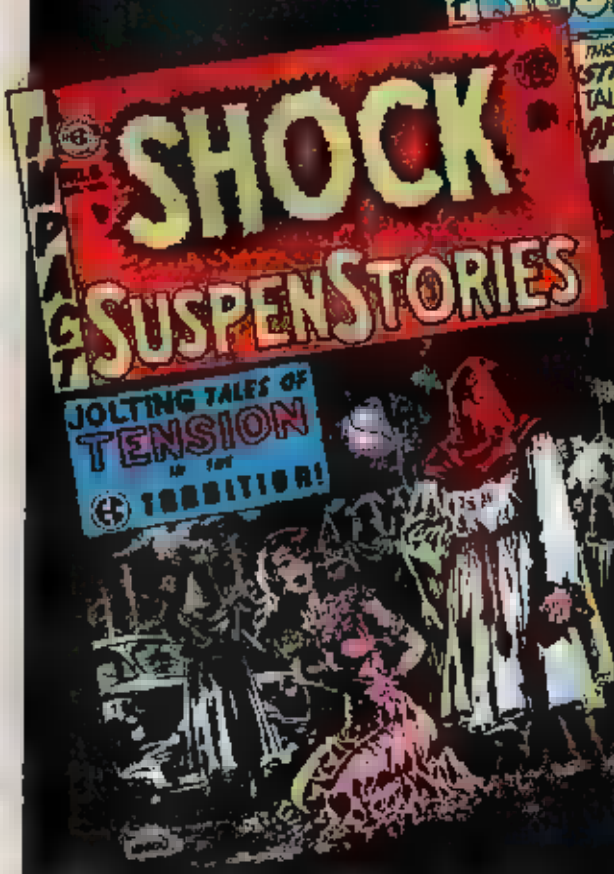

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THE HAUNT OF FEAR

GREETINGS, GORES AND GHOULS! WELCOME ONCE AGAIN TO THE HAUNT OF FEAR! AS YOU KNOW, IN EACH ISSUE OF CRIME SUSPENSTORIES, I LIGHT THE FIRE UNDER MY CRUDDY CAULDRON AND BREW A TALE OF TERROR FOR YOU! YEP! IT'S YOUR HOSTESS, THE OLD WITCH! COME IN! MY REEKING RECIPE IS STEAMING AND SMELLING! I SEE IT'S TIME TO BEGIN DISHING OUT MY SAVORY SERVING OF SHIVERS! SO HERE GOES! I CALL THIS DISGUSTING DISH...

PARALYZED

GLADYS AND ERNEST NEWTON HAD LIVED TOGETHER FOR TWENTY YEARS AS MAN AND WIFE! FROM ALL OUTWARD APPEARANCES THEY WERE HAPPILY MARRIED ...THE PERFECT COUPLE! AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT THEIR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS BELIEVED....

WELL, GOOD-NIGHT GLADYS...ERNIE! IT'S BEEN GRAND HAVING YOU! IT'S NICE TO SEE TWO PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELVES STILL ACTING LIKE LOVE-BIRDS AFTER TWENTY YEARS!

GOOD-NIGHT, SELMA! ERNIE AND I HAD A DELIGHTFUL EVENING!

YES, SELMA! COME... DEAR...

YES! THAT'S WHAT THEIR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS THOUGHT... THAT GLADYS AND ERNEST WERE TWO *MIDDLE-AGED LOVE-BIRDS!* *ACTUALLY*, THEY *DESPISED* EACH OTHER, BUT *GLADYS* WAS TOO *PROUD* A WOMAN TO LET THE TRUTH BE KNOWN! *ERNIE*, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAD REACHED THE *END* OF HIS *ROPE!* THAT'S WHY, AS THEY DROVE HOME, HE ANNOUNCED...

I'M LEAVING YOU, GLADYS! I'VE PUT UP WITH THIS PHONY *PLAY-ACTING LONG ENOUGH!* I'M *THROUGH*... AS OF *TONIGHT!*

I WON'T *LET* YOU WALK OUT ON ME, ERNEST! THINK WHAT OUR *NEIGHBORS* AND *FRIENDS*...

I DON'T GIVE A *HOOT* WHAT *THEY* THINK! I'VE TAKEN *ALL* I'M *GOING* TO TAKE! IT'S *BEEN* LIKE THIS FOR *FIFTEEN YEARS NOW!* WELL... *TONIGHT* I'M *ENDING* THIS *FARCE!*

THAT'S IT! THINK ABOUT *YOURSELF!* *FORGET* ABOUT *ME*... MY *REPUTATION!* IT DOESN'T *MATTER* TO *YOU* IF I BECOME THE *LAUGHING STOCK*...

NO IT DOESN'T! I'M *FINISHED* WORRYING ABOUT WHAT *OTHER* PEOPLE THINK! I *AM* THINKING ABOUT *MYSELF!* *I* DESERVE A LITTLE OUT OF LIFE! I'M ALMOST *FIFTY!* THERE... *GLADYS! LOOK OUT!*

ERNIE! I CAN'T STEER!

EEEEEE!

THE CAR LURCHED CRAZILY, SKIDDING ACROSS THE HIGHWAY! FOR A SPLIT SECOND, THE NIGHT AIR WAS FILLED WITH THE SCREAMING OF BRAKES! THEN COME THE SICKENING THUD... THE SHATTERING CRASH... AS TWO TONS OF STEEL AND GLASS PLOWED INTO THE ADVERTISING BILLBOARD AT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD...

Be Happy Go Lucky

THEN THERE WAS DEAD SILENCE! FROM OFF IN THE DISTANCE, A SIREN BEGAN TO WAIL... DRAWING CLOSER! INSIDE THE WRECKED AUTOMOBILE, ERNEST STIRRED... OPENED HIS EYES! HE LOOKED AROUND... LISTENING FOR A MOMENT! THEN...

GLADYS! YOU ALL RIGHT? SPEAK TO ME!

OOOOOOOOOHH!

THE POLICE CAR DREW UP, AND TWO OFFICERS LEAPED OUT...

I *TOLD* YOU IT WAS A *WRECK!* I HEARD AL!

WHAT A *MESS!* C'MON!

WHAT... WHAT *HAPPENED?* I... I... *ERNEST!*

I CAN'T MOVE! I'M PARALYZED!

HEE, HEE! SOB, ISN'T THAT NICE, DEAR READER? JUST WHEN ERNIE DECIDES TO WALK OUT ON PROUD GLADYS, THERE'S AN AUTO WRECK... AND GLADYS FINDS SHE CAN'T MOVE! NOW YOU CAN'T VERY WELL WALK OUT ON A PARALYZED WIFE, CAN YOU, FIENDS? HUH? OH! WELL, ANYWAY, ERNIE COULDN'T...
IS... IS IT PERMANENT, DOCTOR? WILL SHE EVER WALK AGAIN?
CAN'T SAY FOR SURE, ERNEST! THESE SPINE INJURIES ARE SO VAGUE! SHE MAY RECOVER THE USE OF HER LEGS!
YES! GLADYS COULDN'T WALK AFTER THAT! SHE WAS CONFINED TO A WHEEL-CHAIR... PARALYZED FROM THE WAIST DOWN...
YOU NEEDN'T STAY IF YOU DON'T... SOB... DON'T WANT TO, ERNIE! SOB! I CAN GET ALONG BY MYSELF!
I... I'LL STAY, GLADYS! YOU NEED ME NOW!
SO THEIR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS NEVER FOUND OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT THE 'LOVING' COUPLE! IN FACT, QUITE THE OTHER WAY AROUND...
SUCH A SHAME! AND THEY WERE SO HAPPY, TOO!
HE'S SO DEVOTED TO HER! SHE'S VERY LUCKY!
HE EVEN PREPARES HER MEALS FOR HER! SUCH LOVE!
BUT BEHIND THE WALLS OF THEIR 'LOVE-NEST', THE FIGHTING AND BICKERING WENT ON...
WELL I'M ENTITLED TO ONE NIGHT OUT A WEEK! I'M COOPED UP WITH YOU EVERY DAY!
IS IT MY FAULT THAT I CAN'T WALK? I'M AFRAID TO BE LEFT ALONE! SOME PROWLER...
HERE! I BOUGHT IT TODAY! IF YOU'RE SO AFRAID, KEEP IT NEAR YOU WHILE I'M GONE!
GASP! A GUN!
WHEN YOUR PROWLER SHOWS UP, JUST SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER! WELL! SEE YOU IN A COUPLE OF HOURS!
ERNEST! WAIT! PLEASE! I'M AFRAID! I... I...

BUT ERNEST DIDN'T WAIT! HE STAMPED OUT OF THE HOUSE AND SLAMMED THE DOOR! AND POOR GLADYS WAS LEFT ALL ALONE! IN FACT, SHE WAS LEFT ALONE OFTEN AFTER THAT! SOMETIMES TWICE A WEEK! AFTER ALL! A MAN NEEDS A LITTLE REST FROM CATERING TO A WOMAN HE DESPISES. DAY AFTER DAY AFTER DAY...
GOING OUT AGAIN, ERNEST?
THAT'S RIGHT, GLADYS! I'M GOING TO TAKE IN A MOVIE! I'LL BE BACK ABOUT ELEVEN!
BUT THAT NIGHT...WHEN ERNEST ARRIVED AT THE MOVIE THEATER...
OH, BLAST! I FORGOT MY WALLET! ER... HOW MUCH TIME IS THERE TILL THE LAST SHOW STARTS?
ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES, SIR!
ERNIE HURRIED BACK TO THE HOUSE! IF HE MOVED FAST, HE COULD STILL MAKE IT! BUT AS HE BURST IN THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR...
GASP! ERNIE!
HUH? GLADYS!
GLADYS STOOD BEFORE THE RADIO... TUNING A STATION! HER WHEEL-CHAIR SAT EMPTY... ABOUT TEN FEET BEHIND HER...
YOU...YOU CAN WALK!
YES...YOU FOOL! I CAN WALK! I'VE ONLY PRETENDED I WAS PARALYZED! I EVEN FOOLED THE DOCTOR!
WHY, GLADYS? WHY DID YOU DO THIS?
YOU THREATENED TO LEAVE ME! I WAS AFRAID OF WHAT OUR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS WOULD SAY!
SO YOU DELIBERATELY WRECKED THE CAR!
I WANTED TO KILL US BOTH!
4

YOU'RE MAD! INSANE!
THEN, WHEN I SAW THAT I'D FAILED, I DECIDED TO ACT BADLY HURT! I KNEW THAT IF I WERE HELPLESS, YOU WOULDN'T LEAVE ME!
WELL, NOW I KNOW THE TRUTH, GLADYS... AND I'M GETTING OUT!
NO YOU'RE NOT, ERNEST! I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU! I CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE YOU TELL EVERYONE WHAT YOU FOUND OUT! I COULDN'T LIVE IT DOWN!
GLADYS! PUT DOWN THAT GUN!
YOU'RE GOING TO DISAPPEAR, ERNEST! NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW I'VE BEEN FAKING MY PARALYSIS!
DISAPPEAR?
I'M GOING TO KILL YOU...THEN BURY YOU IN THE CELLAR!
YOU'RE CRAZY, GLADYS! YOU'LL BE CAUGHT!
ME, ERNEST? YOU FORGET! I'M PARALYZED! HOW COULD A PARALYZED WOMAN DRAG A BODY INTO THE CELLAR AND BURY IT? THEY WOULDN'T EVEN THINK TO LOOK!
B-BUT...WHAT WILL YOU TELL THEM HAPPENED TO ME?
I'LL TELL THEM YOU JUST DISAPPEARED! THAT YOU WENT OUT TO THE MOVIE TONIGHT AND THAT YOU NEVER CAME HOME...JUST VANISHED!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, GLADYS?
I'M TURNING UP THE RADIO SO THE NEIGHBORS WON'T HEAR THE SHOT!

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THEN, WHEN I SAW THAT I'D FAILED, I DECIDED TO ACT BADLY HURT! I KNEW THAT... IF I WERE HELPLESS, YOU WOULDN'T LEAVE ME!
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WHAT ARE YOU DOING, GLADYS?
I'M TURNING UP THE RADIO SO THE NEIGHBORS WON'T HEAR THE SHOT!

HEE, HEE! WE INTERRUPT THIS STORY TO BRING YOU A SPECIAL RADIO PROGRAM, DESIGNED TO DROWN OUT SHOTS! IF YOU'RE TIRED OF ANYONE...ANYONE AT ALL...JUST TUNE US IN... ANY-TIME! WE ALSO ANSWER REQUESTS! BLUDGEON-DROWNING-OUT-PROGRAMS! KNIFING-DROWNING-OUT-PROGRAMS! STRANGLING-DROWNING-OUT-PROGRAMS! WE CAN FILL YOUR EVERY NEED! LIKE GLADYS, THERE! WE'VE JUST FILLED HERS...
GLADYS STARED DOWN AT THE LIFELESS BODY OF HER LATE HUSBAND, ERNEST...
I WON'T HAVE YOU RUINING MY REPUTATION! I WON'T! I WON'T!
THEN SHE DRAGGED HIS CORPSE INTO THE CELLAR AND DUG A SHALLOW GRAVE IN THE SOFT-SOIL FLOOR...
OH, I'LL BE THE TALK OF MY FRIENDS NOW! 'POOR PARALYZED GLADYS! HER HUSBAND DISAPPEARED! MAYBE KIDNAPPED!'
GLADYS DID A LITTLE DANCE AS SHE PATTED THE SOIL BACK DOWN, FLAT ONCE MORE...
...AND PRETTY SOON I'LL TAKE A TRIP TO ONE OF THOSE MINERAL-WATER HEALTH RESORTS AND STAGE A 'MIRACULOUS RECOVERY'!
THE NEXT NIGHT, GLADYS HAD A VISITOR...
I NOTICED THE CANDLE BURNING IN YOUR WINDOW, MRS. NEWTON! I JUST CAME OVER TO SEE...WHY... YOU'VE BEEN CRYING!
IT'S ERNEST... MY HUSBAND, MRS. STARK! HE...HE DISAPPEARED LAST NIGHT! I'M FRANTIC... SOB...I'M SO WORRIED ABOUT HIM!
DISAPPEARED? OH, DEAR...
HE WENT OUT TO A MOVIE ABOUT SEVEN, AND HE NEVER CAME BACK! I HAVEN'T HEARD A WORD FROM HIM! I...SOB...I'M AFRAID THAT MAYBE... MAYBE...HE'S BEEN KIDNAPPED... OR MURDERED!
DON'T FRET, MRS. NEWTON! HE'LL COME BACK! DON'T THINK SUCH AWFUL THINGS!
I PUT THE CANDLE IN THE WINDOW...HOPING... SOB... PRAYING...

HEE, HEE! OH, HOW THE NEIGHBORS WERE *CONCERNED* OVER MR. NEWTON'S STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE! THEY *FLOCKED* TO POOR PARALYZED GLADYS'S HOUSE *DAILY!* THE *CANDLE* GLADYS PLACED IN THE WINDOW EACH NIGHT BECAME A *SYMBOL* OF HER *HOPE*...

ONE NIGHT...

IT'S BEEN *THREE MONTHS* NOW! I THINK IT'S SAFE! TOMORROW I'LL PHONE FOR RESERVATIONS AT *TEPID SPRINGS!* THEN...

THE CANDLE STOOD IN THE WINDOW... FANNED BY THE COOL EVENING BREEZES! GLADYS'S HEAD BEGAN TO NOD! SHE FELL ASLEEP! THE BREEZE INCREASED! THE FLIMSY CURTAINS BEGAN TO BLOW! SUDDENLY A TINY WHISP OF FLAME SHOT UPWARD ACROSS THE DRAPES...

GLADYS AWOKE TO FIND THE ROOM IN FLAMES...

GOOD LORD! I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!

GLADYS TRIED TO STAND! HER LEGS BUCKLED! THE WHEEL-CHAIR SHOT OUT FROM BENEATH HER...

AAAAAAAAAAAAA!

AS GLADYS PLUMMED AWKWARDLY TO THE FLOOR, SOMETHING SNAPPED! SOMETHING IN HER *BACK!* SHE TRIED TO GET UP! HER *MUSCLES* WOULD NOT *RESPOND!* SHE TRIED TO *CRY OUT*, BUT *NO SOUND CAME!* FOR GLADYS HAD *BROKEN HER SPINE*... AND *NOW*... SHE *ACTUALLY WAS PARALYZED!* SHE LAY *HELPLESS*... UNABLE TO *MOVE*... WATCHING *HORRIFIED* AS THE *FLAMES* DREW *CLOSER* AND *CLOSER*...

HEE, HEE! YEP! THEY *FOUND* GLADYS'S CHARRED AND BLACKENED REMAINS IN THE RUINS OF HER HOME! AND, *MY*, HOW THE *NEIGHBORS DID TALK!* ONLY IT DIDN'T DO *GLADYS* MUCH GOOD... WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY! POOR GLADYS! THE NEIGHBORS HAD BEEN *SO* KIND, SHE'D BEEN FORCED TO *STICK* TO THE WHEEL-CHAIR FOR *THREE MONTHS! THAT'S* WHY HER *LEGS BUCKLED* WHEN SHE TRIED TO *STAND UP!* IF *YOU* WERE EVER *CONFINED TO BED* FOR, SAY, A *WEEK OR TWO*, AND THEN ALLOWED TO *STAND UP*... YOU'D *KNOW* WHAT I *MEAN!* 'BYE NOW! GUY E.O.!

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WHAT? CUT UP A COMIC BOOK? SHAME!

(continued from Inside Cover)

Dear Russ Cochran,

I deeply dislike the new 'format' of making all your **good** old comic books in an extra, extra huge size. I loved 'em the way they were! And the price! You would probably get less business with that price! It's not like **kids** carry around $3.95 in their pockets!

Zaccary Damien

P.S. Thanks anyway.

Dear Mr. Cochran,

I would like to thank you for publishing the EC Library. You have made a lot of nostalgic middle-aged Fan Addicts happy. To me these horror comics are one of the highlights of my youth. They are to me what the Rosebud sled was to Charles Foster Kane.

E.L. Farris
Rogers, AR

Dear Russ Cochran,

I concede that this new larger format shows the art of these fine artists better, but this is outweighed by the price increase in these dismal economic times. The cumbersome size, storing difficulty, and on top of all that I feel like I'm carrying around a child's coloring book.

Please bring back the regular comic book size stories.

Scott Ceurvels

P.S. Maybe an Annual of this size in each of your titles would be better?

Dear Mr. Cochran,

My love for the EC comics began in 1989 when I purchased #1 and #11 of your EC Classics. Then I purchased seven original ECs including FRONTLINE COMBAT #12 (May-June 1953). There is a coupon in back that someone could send for information about the Ground Observer Corps. A person wrote their name and address on the coupon. The person wrote:

Oli Johnson
215 Burns St. Forest Hills
Li New York, NY

If Oli Johnson is reading this, or if anybody who knows him, could you please write me. I would really like to get in touch with him because probably in his wildest thoughts, he wouldn't think 38 years later a seventeen year old kid would have a comic book he once owned. Thank you.

EC will never die!
John Harmon
Rt. 3 255 So. C
Broken Bow, NE 68822

Dear Russ & Ghouls, Gals, et al at EC,

At my local comic store today I found myself looking for my EC fix of the latest horror or science fiction comic to hit the streets. What I found was an over-grown comic TALES FROM THE CRYPT which apparently had eaten Wheaties somewhere along the way from West Plains. This puppy was huge, dwarfing the small comics nearby. I hate to "drop a load of fizzies in your toilet bowl" as they say in ANIMAL HOUSE, but I'm not sure I like this new format on a permanent basis, especially at $4 a pop. Don't you know there's a recession going on? How's a little kid going to spring 4 bucks for a comic and still subscribe to **Playboy?** OK, it was a nice change of pace to see CK, VK and that Old Witch up close and personal, but I'm only 32 and my eyes still work good. This huge printed book looks like it belongs in a convalescent home so the old folks can see it from across the room! Where am I going to put this thing now? How will I store it and keep it for future generations of my offspring? How will I get cardboard and mylar? It's kinda flimsy, as well. Get the picture? go back to regular size, and, while you're at it, bring back the sci-fi to a separate book. Do this format once per year if you have to.

Still friends,
Ben Margot

Dear Russ,

I just today purchased issue #1 of TALES FROM THE CRYPT at one of the area comic shops. You asked for opinions on your experiment—well, this time is definitely a case of "ask and you shall receive". I DON'T LIKE IT, and the reasons why have been enumerated for you below.

(1) Too big, clumsy to handle, clumsy for retailer to display.

(2) Keeping it nice - who has plastic, polypropiene, mylar or whatever to fit these things?

(3) Price - well, yes, 2 EC comics for $3.95 isn't a terribly high price. However, 2 ECs for $2.00 was an even better deal.

In summation, it is just hard for me to see where paying 2x as much for the same thing plus the clumsy size offered, storage problems and all is a better deal for the consumer/fan. It's still an EC, they're still great reading—I don't feel the larger panels and price justify the means.

Thanks for the opportunity to criticize, blast, nit-pick, etc., etc.

Best regards,
Jeff Patton
Massillon, OH

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AN ENTERTAINING
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64 PAGES OF VINTAGE EC HO
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AMERICA'S TOP HORROR WRITER!
ON SALE JULY 30!

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